Encounter

September 1977 80p

RAYMOND ARON

My Defence of our Decadent Europe

The French philosopher and journalist makes his assessment of the hopes and perils of the current East-West rivalry, the "End of the Cold War", the advent of "Euro-Communism", the "inevitability of socialism", and the US-USSR "Balance of Terror" ....

With an introduction by
Leopold Labedz

Italo Calvino
Story

Nora Beloff
How a Free Press Could Survive

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Rembrandt & Spinoza

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Edited by Melvin J Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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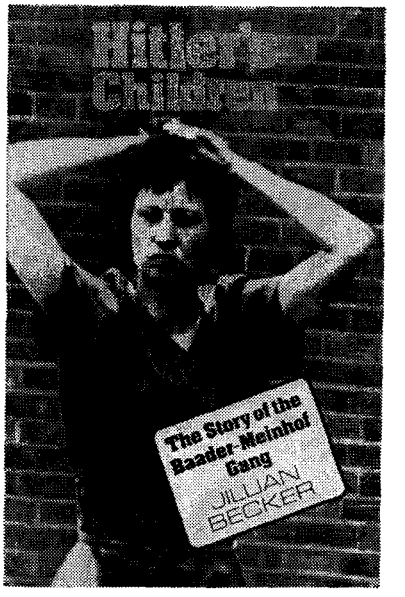

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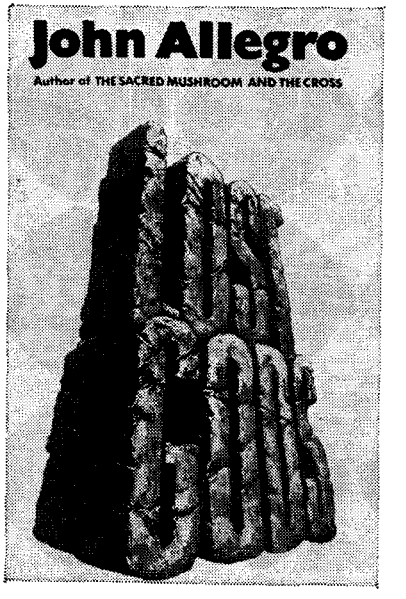

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Italo Calvino

Neanderthal Man

INTERVIEWER: I am speaking to you from picturesque Neander, a valley near Düsseldorf. All round me, as far as the eye can see, there stretches a winding limestone landscape. You can hear my voice echoing from the walls of caves; some of them are natural caves, some of them man-made. It was during quarrying in these caves in 1856 that one of the valley's most ancient inhabitants—he came here about 35,000 years ago—was found in existence. Neanderthal Man. That's the name he has generally come to be known by, by a natural association. I have made a special journey to Neanderthal in order to interview him. Mr Neander—I shall call him by this shortened form of the name in my interview—Mr Neander, as you may perhaps have heard, is a shy man, you might almost say a "difficult" man—it's not surprising, really, when you consider his great age. And, apparently, he doesn't set much store by his international fame. Nevertheless he has most kindly agreed to answer a few questions for our listeners. Here he comes now, with that characteristic loose-limbed gait of his, and I can see him scrutinising me, from under that prominent frontal ridge. I will seize my opportunity and ask him, right away, a rather bold question—a question which, I know, will interest many of our listeners. Mr Neander: did it surprise you at all to find yourself a celebrated personality? I mean, so far as we know, up till then you had never done anything very remarkable; and then all of a sudden you found yourself a world figure. What would be your comment?

NEANDER: You say. But were you there? I was, I was there. You weren't.

I: Indeed yes, you were there. Well now, that's really all you would wish to say on the subject?

N: I was there then.

I: A point excellently taken. Mr Neander's achievement is not merely to have been there, but to have been there *then*, a very long time ago, before so many other people. No, no one would dream of contesting Mr Neander's claims here. All the same, others were there even earlier. Recent researches have proved . . . you would confirm this, wouldn't you, Mr Neander? . . . have produced evidence, extensive evidence, over various continents, of the existence of human beings, in the strictest sense of the term. . . .

N: My dad. . . .

I: . . . going back a million years.

N: My granny. . . .

I: So, though of course, no one would dream of disputing your priority, Mr Neander, it's a question of *relative* priority. Let's say you are the earliest. . . .

N: Earlier than you, anyway. . . .

I: I wouldn't dispute that for a moment. But that's not quite the point. The point is, you are the first man to be thought of by posterity *as* the first man.

N: That's what you think. Before, there was my dad. . . .

I: And not only him, of course. . . .

N: And Gran. . . .

I: And earlier than them. Think carefully, Mr Neander. No doubt your grandmother had a grandmother?

N: No.

I: She *didn't*?

N: The bear.

I: The bear! A totemic ancestor! I hope listeners caught that. Mr Neander mentions, as the founding-father of his lineage, a bear—evidently a totem-animal, symbolising his own clan, his own family.

N: That's what you think. First there's a bear,

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next the bear goes, he eats my Granny. . . . Next I'm there, I go, I kill the bear. . . . Next I eat it, I eat the bear.

I: A moment please, while I comment to our listeners on this fascinating information! First there's a bear. You couldn't have put it more clearly. What you are describing to us is the priority of nature-in-the-raw, of the world of biology—providing the backcloth, a sumptuous backcloth, for Man's emergence on the scene. And when Man appears blinking before the footlights of History, we have the beginnings of a titanic struggle with Nature. Nature is hostile, and then, little by little, she is tamed and begins to obey our commands—it's a multi-millennial process, and Mr Neander has evoked it most vividly with his little anecdote of the hunting of the bear. It's—how shall I put it?—it's as it were a mythical version of the Birth of History itself.

N: It was me there. Not you. The bear was there. Where I go, the bear goes. The bear is all round where I am; no me, no bear.

I: Precisely. As I understand it, Mr Neander has a mental horizon which takes in only the part of the world immediately within his range of vision; there is no place in it for events at a distance, whether distant in space or in time. The bear is where I see the bear: if I don't see him, he doesn't exist. Obviously we must keep this limitation in mind during the rest of our interview, and be careful not to ask questions that go beyond the intellectual powers of what is, after all, a fairly primitive evolutionary stage. . . .

N: What's that? What's that? I'm telling you about eating. It's the same, the eating that I'm after and that the bear's after. I'm the best at catching small quick animals. The bear's the smartest at catching big heavy animals. Right? And then the bear takes them off me, or I take them off the bear. Right?

I: Oh, perfectly clear, Mr Neander; not the slightest need to upset yourself. It's a case of what we call *symbiosis*, a symbiosis between two species, one belonging to the genus *homo* and one belonging to the genus *ursus*. Or rather, if you prefer, a state of biological equilibrium. In the midst of the ruthless battle for survival, two creatures form an unspoken pact. . . .

N: And next, either the bear kills me, or I kill the bear. . . .

I: Exactly, exactly. The battle for survival is declared, and the fittest survives. By which we don't just mean the stronger—though Mr Neander, albeit a little short in the legs, is undoubtedly well-developed—but above all, the more intelligent. And Mr Neander, for all his receding forehead, exhibits remarkable mental abilities. . . . Now, here is the question I've been wanting to put to you, Mr Neander: Was there ever a moment when you were afraid the human race might be defeated and go under? You follow me, Mr Neander? Disappear from the face of the earth?

N: Granny. . . . Granny on the ground.

I: Mr Neander is harking back to that episode—it must be what we call a traumatic experience—far back in his past . . . which is to say, *our* past.

N: The bear on the ground. . . . I ate the bear. I ate it, not you.

I: There's another thing I wanted to ask you. Did you ever, at some particular moment, have the feeling that the human race had won, the certainty that though bears might one day become extinct, *we* should never do so, for nothing would stop our progress? And did you ever picture yourself receiving our thanks—the thanks of humans at a higher stage of evolution—the thanks, the gratitude, that I am expressing here, today, over the microphone?

N: Mmmmm. . . . If there's walking to do, I walk . . . if there's stopping to do, I stop . . . if there's bear to eat, I stop and eat bear. . . . I walk next, but the bear stops where he is, a bone here, on the ground, a bone there, on the ground. . . . Behind me the rest come, they're walking, they come to where the bear is, where the bear stopped, they stop, they eat the bear. . . . My son gnaws a bone, another of my sons gnaws a bone, another of my sons gnaws a bone. . . .

I: Mr Neander is recreating for us one of the climactic moments in the life of the hunting clan, the ritual banquet after a successful hunting expedition. . . .

N: My brother-in-law gnaws a bone, my wife gnaws a bone. . . .

I: As you will have heard, in Mr Neander's very own words, women were the last to be served at a ritual banquet, which is clear

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admission of the inferior status assigned to them. . . .

N: That's what you say. First I bring the bear to my wife, my wife makes a fire under the bear, next I go and collect basil, next I come back with the basil and I say "Where's the leg?" and my wife says "I've eaten it, haven't I, to make sure it wasn't raw?"

I: Even in this society of hunters and food-collectors—that's what this evidence shows, isn't it?—even here, there existed a clearly-defined division of labour between men and women. . . .

N: Next I go and collect marjoram, next I come back with the marjoram, I say "Where's the other leg?" and my wife says "I've eaten it, haven't I, to make sure it wasn't burnt?" And I say to her, "Do you know who's going to collect the thyme? *You're* going to collect the thyme."

I: From this delightful little domestic anecdote we can extract various important factual data. First, the presence of a knowledge of fire and of its use in cooking; secondly, the gathering of aromatic herbs and the use of them for culinary purposes; thirdly, the eating of meat in large separated portions, which implies the use of proper cutting instruments: quite an advanced stage in flint-working, indeed. Let's see if our friend can tell us anything on this subject. I will formulate the question in a way that will not pre-empt his reply. Mr Neander . . . on the subject of stones . . . yes, that's right, those fine flints and rocks that we see all around us here. . . . Did you ever try—how shall I put it?—try knocking one against another, to see if they are as hard as they seem?

N: WHAT'S THAT about flints? Do you know what to do with flints? Bang! Bang! I go bang! with flints. You take the flint, right, you put it on the big stone, you take another flint, that one, you give it a good crack, bang! You know where to give it a good crack? There, that's where, that's where you give it a crack, bang! a good crack. Ow! You've split your finger. Next you suck your finger, next you jump about, next you take another flint, you put the flint back on the big stone, bang! Look, it's split in two, a big piece and small piece, one with a curve that side, the other with a curve that side, you take this near one, it fits nicely in your hand, like that, you take the other one in the other hand, like that, and you go at it: bing! Understand? You go ding! on that spot there. Ding! Ow! You've driven the point into your hand! Next you suck your hand, next you dance about on one foot, next you take the piece in your hand again, and the other piece in the other hand, bang! Ow! a bit has gone in your eye! You rub your eye, you give the big stone a kick, you take the big piece and the small piece again, bang! you chip off a little piece, and another quite close, bang! and another, and look, they've left a lovely hole, a lovely dint, and next another dint, and another dint, like that all round, and up and down, and on the other side, bing! bing! look, it's getting round, and thin, and sharp, so sharp. . . .

I: I would like to thank. . . .

N: . . . then you give little taps like this, clink! clink! and you chip off little pieces, clink! clink! and, look, what's left has tiny teeth now. Clink! clink!

I: Yes, yes, nothing could be clearer. On behalf of our listeners, I would like. . . .

N: You don't know. Now's when you can give it a knock *there*. Clonk! and next you can give it a knock on the other side, clunk!

I: Clunk! Exactly. And now let's turn our attention to. . . .

N: . . . so now it fits nicely in your hand, it's worked all over, and next the real work begins, you take another flint, and you put it on the big stone, clonk!

I: And so on, and so on. You've explained it all most beautifully. The important thing is the beginning, of course. So now let us. . . .

N: No, when I begin, I don't stop, there's always another flint somewhere around that looks better than the first one, and I throw the first away and take that one and bang! bang! always plenty of pieces to throw away and plenty of pieces even better than the first ones, and I go at them, bing! bing! and what comes out is that I can make anything I want come out and the more dints I make in these pieces of stone, the more I can make; where I've made one dint, I can make two, and in each dint I make two more dints, and finally it all falls to bits and I throw it on the pile of splinters, the pile gets bigger and bigger, but over there there's a whole mountain of rock.

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I: Now that Mr Neander has so vividly described to us this exhausting, monotonous work. . . .
N: Monotonous? *Monotonous*? Do you know how to make dints in stones? Do you? Dints the same size. Do you know how to make *monotonous* dints? No, you don't, of course, you don't. So why not keep quiet? I know how. I've always known, ever since I realised I had a thumb. Can you see it? My thumb. That's my thumb. And here's where I put it, and there's where I put my other fingers, and a stone in between, all nice and firm, and as soon as I've seen it . . . the stone in my hand, me hitting it . . . well. . . . Well, what I can do with stones I can do with everything, I can do it with the noises I make with my mouth, I can make noises like this, a a a ,p p p, gn gn gn, and then I go on making noises, I start talking about talking, I start working flints that can be used to work other flints with, I start thinking, I think of all the thoughts I could think, and I feel like explaining something to other people, for instance, paint red stripes on my face, just so as to let people know that I have painted red stripes on my face, and I feel like making my wife a necklace of wild boar's teeth, just to let people know my wife has a necklace of wild boar's teeth and yours hasn't. You think you possess things I never had, no, no, I had it all; anything anyone has ever done, I was doing it already, anything anyone has ever thought or signified, it was already in what I was saying or doing or signifying, all the complexity of complexity was there, all I needed to do was hold this flint, with my thumb here, holding it against my palm, and my other fingers there, and I had it all, I had everything anyone has ever had or known or been able to do, not because it was mine but because it existed, because it was there, because it existed already, and ever since people have had a little less, and known a little less, and been able to do a little less, a little less than might have been, a little less than what was there once, than what I had once, than what I once was. I tell you, I belonged to everything and I was part of everything, not like you, and everything belonged to everything and was part of everything, everything that everything needed, everything stupid even it was there in that clink! clink! clonk! clonk! so whatever you say, whatever you think you are, whatever makes you think you exist, only you don't exist, or if you do, it's only because I existed, and the bear existed, and the stones and the necklaces existed and the hit fingers and all the things that are needed for existence and when they exist there's existence.

Translated by P. N. Furbank

Flints

Thousands of the flints had been found—
palm-flat they became remarkable
at last in gravel piles,
in pods of trodden earth.
Later, through the sieves,
through the bone fragments came the ghosts of men.

Behind the pits and quarries
in the confusion of new faces
their heads turned these workers into idiots,
into chimpanzees or murder victims.
Their split skulls made them cannibals,
their geometry the missing link.

The flint knappers, knowing freedom,
hid their truth in simple living—
flints to the cave; bones to the hearth.
When our lives have got them guessing
they'll find our link and know
our overstatement like dissection.

William Peskett

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Raymond Aron

My Defence of Our Decadent Europe

1. *From Marx to Solzhenitsyn*

AFTER 25 YEARS OF unprecedented economic growth, Western Europe is at present going through a crisis—economic, political, and spiritual. And men of little faith are turning their faces towards a future which they already consider inevitable. During the last electoral campaign in France (1974), I was struck by the difference in the signatures put to the various declarations of public support in favour of François Mitterand and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing respectively: hundreds and hundreds for the former, and for the latter only a few dozen at the most. It seemed as though lawyers, academics, writers, actors supported the leader of the Socialist-Communist opposition by an overwhelming majority, and that the others, perhaps equally large numbers of them, did not dare take the risk of openly declaring themselves in favour of the so-called man of the Right (or the opponent of the Left).

I felt as though I had been taken back 40 years; old recollections surfaced from the depths of my memory. Friends in Berlin (where I was then a graduate student from Paris) were asking me what was the point in opposing National-Socialism, "the wave of the future", which was drawing German youth and millions of despairing people towards their tragic destiny. And today friends are saying, privately—the Socialist-Communist coalition is bound to win one day, if not tomorrow then the day after; that being the case, the sooner it does the better. I hear on all sides the following hypotheses being put forward—either the government of the Socialist-Communist *Programme Commun* will prove capable of ruling the country without breaking off from the West, without stifling basic freedoms, and the Communist party will be reintegrated into the nation; or, more likely, the Socialist-Communist coalition will fail in the way that the Popular Front did in 1936, and the present majority will return to power, with more freedom for manoeuvre and more capable of change than at present.

It is possible that *l'expérience socialiste* (to use François Mitterand's phrase) will take place in the near future, after an electoral victory in 1978. No one thinks of comparing the leaders of the two big Left-wing parties to Hitler or Stalin. Furthermore, it now seems to me that the distance between Stalin and Brezhnev is considerable. But it is these very differences that increase the danger. What is there to worry about, we are told, when Marxism-Leninism has lost its power of attraction, when the Communist parties of Italy and France are showing us a new face, and declaring their independence? Is not the reunification of Europe now at hand, the reunification of the Continent, divided in two by *les charcutiers* of Yalta?*

In Italy the "historic compromise", in France the Socialist-Communist coalition in power: what then would remain of the balance between

THE INTELLECTUAL *and ideological background to* RAYMOND ARON'S *"Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente" (just published by Laffont) is sketched in* LEOPOLD LABEDZ'S *"Letter from Paris", which the reader will find on pp. 63–66 in this issue of* ENCOUNTER. *(A second and concluding instalment of Professor Aron's text will be published next month.)*

* I am repeating the legend. It is not historically true that the Big Three decided on the division of the world and of Europe at Yalta.

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the two Europes, indispensable as it is to the world balance of power? I am not denying that the Communist parties want to distance themselves from the Soviet Union (from Stalin's Russia, definitely, and from Leonid Brezhnev's too), but whether they are sincere or not when they proclaim their national road to socialism, they still belong to the same family as the Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union. They profess essentially the same doctrine as the Soviets, interpreted in the same manner for many years; they have not renounced "democratic centralism"; and their concept of the régime to come is still identical with the Soviet concept, although they maintain that they will avoid its totalitarian implications. Whether the Euro-Communists are concealing their aims or not is less important than the consequences, probable or inevitable, of their methods and their ideas.

In other words, the freedom of Western Europe is today threatened by the combined effects of a militarily powerful Soviet Union, whose troops (in General de Gaulle's phrase of 1949) are still "two days' march from the *Tour de France*", of the electoral progress of the Communist parties in Italy and France, and finally of the Europeans' loss of confidence in themselves.

The Decadents & the Dreamers

SHOULD ONE SAY loss of confidence or simply self-criticism? Should one admire the Europeans' capacity to condemn themselves, to parade social and cultural defects before the eyes of the world, to magnify them to the point of losing all sense of the imperfections inherent in men and institutions?

In matters of productivity, technical innovation, living standards, scientific progress and human freedom, it is the West, the United States and Europe combined, which has taken the lead over the last 30 years. Marxist-Leninist propaganda tries to devalue this achievement by identifying "capitalism" with "imperialism", as though Western prosperity were founded on exploitation of the Third World and not on genuine work and productivity. Without denying the part which Empires played in the fortunes of Europe in past centuries, one must recognise that it is from the European-American centre of the world economy that the Third World now seeks aid, and not from the so-called socialist countries; it is the West, and it alone, which possesses the means to reduce, little by little, the gap separating the rich and poor countries. The spokesmen of the Third World take some satisfaction in railing against American or Western imperialism. Yet when a Latin American intellectual is forced out of his country by some military coup, where does he take refuge—in Moscow?

Should one, then, be making a plea in defence of a liberal Europe, our decadent Europe? And indeed which of the two Europes should one really call decadent?

THE THEME OF THE DECLINE of the Roman Empire has obsessed men's minds throughout the centuries. Today historians still debate the cause, or the combination of causes, which precipitated the collapse of a grand and powerful political structure. Suffice it to recall Churchill's phrase "I will not preside over the dismantling of the British Empire", or that of General de Gaulle who wanted to raise *le drapeau tricolore* in every place it had flown before 1939, in order to understand one view of "decolonisation." The fashionable vocabulary—the value judgments, implicit in the intellectual and moral conformism which reigns from one end of the planet to the other—condemns "colonialism" without reservation and exalts the "liberation of peoples." Yet, in the ideological battle, the Europeans can claim much merit for having "given up" their empires. With the exception of the French who fought twice (in Viet Nam and in Algeria) in the vain hope of resisting an irresistible historical movement, the Europeans, and the British in particular, gave up their imperial role with more grace than any other conquerors in history. It was the Soviet Union which took advantage of military victory to enlarge its territory and to impose its institutions and its will on a hundred million Europeans.*

If historical conflicts were played out clearly before a tribunal of right and morality, the defenders of Western Europe could plead their cause with ease, and indeed would win it. Unfortunately another sort of trial is taking place, concealed by ideology and in terms quite unencumbered by universal conscience.

The Soviet Union kept its empire which, today, stretches from Weimar to Vladivostok; the British and the French lost theirs. Whether they

* The following are the territories which the Soviet Union annexed as a result of its victory in the Second World War: *Finnish* provinces (44,158 square km inhabited by 500,000 people in 1938); *Polish* provinces (178,705 square km and 11 million inhabitants); *Rumanian* provinces (Bessarabia 44,288 square km and 3,200,000 inhabitants; Northern Bukovina 10,437 square km and 500,000 inhabitants); the *Baltic* States (Estonia 47,396 square km and 1,122,000 inhabitants; Latvia 65,784 square km and 1,951,000 inhabitants; Lithuania 55,683 square km and 2,957,000 inhabitants); *East Prussia* (11,655 square km and 300,000 inhabitants).

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wanted to keep them or not changes nothing: does not renunciation, as much as a stubborn resistance, signify decadence? In any case, in the four corners of the world, pamphleteers continue to rail against "Western imperialism" at a time when the European Empires have disappeared into historical oblivion.

LET ME TAKE A LOOK at some disturbing facts. In spite of its richness, in spite (or because) of its culture and its freedoms, the whole of Western Europe does not believe itself capable of defending itself alone. It entreats the United States to ensure the political balance and its security by maintaining an American army, the symbol of transatlantic nuclear deterrence, to face the Soviet divisions, stationed for 30 years now in the heart of Europe.

In one meaning of the word, then, the decadence of Western Europe cannot be doubted. To overcome any objections, one has only to replace the word decadence by the word decline. *Decadence* suggests value judgments or a scheme of change. *Decline* simply describes power relations. Britain's economic decline started in the last third of the 19th century, not when the industrial production of the USA overtook that of the United Kingdom, but from the moment that Germany took the lead in pioneering new industries (*e.g.* chemical). In the same way, the French decline in the 19th century was the inevitable result of the gap in population growth between France and the rest of Europe.

The "law of unequal development" (to use Lenin's formula) applies at the same time to the population, to the economy, to technical-scientific innovation, to political-military power. Britain, industrial and financial centre of the world market, whose Navy ruled the oceans, was condemned to decline because it could not conceal its loss of power. It had to content itself, sooner or later, with a place less disproportionate to the size of its island territory and population.

In the same way, the whole of Western Europe, on the eve of the 1914 War, enjoyed a predominance which destined it, sooner or later, to decline. Democratic régimes which pride themselves on a certain liberalism do not keep for long the doubtful virtues essential to an imperial metropolis. The contradiction between the values proclaimed at home and practice of domination abroad undermines both the values and the power of domination at the same time. Even without the two World Wars, Europe would not have avoided decline, although it would not have been so rapid or dramatic. But I only want to underline here that the events of 1939–45 meant the decline of Western Europe to a point where it does not even possess that share of political-military power which its economic resources, if not its size, should allow it to claim.

Indeed, Western Europe continues to hold, both on the world market and in international commerce, a place quite out of proportion to the size of its population. In the 30 years since the War, it has come closer to the United States in relation to production per capita and labour productivity. For better or for worse, Western Europe reacted to military defeat with a surge of passion for building; West Germany, France and Italy led the race for Gross National Product; Great Britain, for its part, wiser or more resigned, let itself be overtaken by the Common Market Six.

LET US SUPPOSE THAT the end of this century and the next century belong to "the producers" (as the Saint-Simonians would put it) and not to the warriors: at once the perspectives change. What use are the thousands upon thousands of tanks which come out of Soviet factories every year and which are used to re-establish orthodoxy in Prague (they did not need quite so many) or to fan little wars in the Middle East or Africa? War between the industrialised countries of the Old Continent, armed as they are with nuclear weapons, would cost the victor dear, always supposing one knew how to identify him among the radioactive ruins. What benefit could victory confer? The Soviet Union profits enormously by Western science and technology; and it is rather easier to get it from Europe than from the United States. In spite of their zealous convictions, the men in the Kremlin must suspect that their own régime stifles innovation; and they know that (temporarily, at least) they need the vital creativity of "decadent" Europe.

This Europe sells the Soviet Union machines and factories, and in return buys raw materials—an exchange typical of the relations between developed and under-developed countries. Here we are back to a more optimistic view of things: military empires belong to the past—henceforth science, technology, and productivity will determine the rank of individuals and nations. And in this hierarchy the Soviet Union is lagging behind. If the whole of humanity is moving towards a universal epoch of technology, it is not the Soviet Union which today leads the field. On the contrary, it is following the lead with difficulty, by imitating and borrowing.

But—and here we are back again to inquietude—do science and technology, which are turning the conditions of our existence topsy-turvy, do they in fact determine the destiny of states? Does not *virtu*, in the sense of Machiavelli, still consist of the capacity for collective action and historic

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vitality, and do not these qualities remain the ultimate cause of the fortune of nations, of their ascent and their fall? Suddenly, the perspectives are transformed, overturned.

Marxism, of a more or less Leninist and vulgarised variety, continues to spread in Western Europe, taught and inculcated as it is by schools and universities in France, in Italy, and elsewhere. Naturally, it is rarely a question of Marxism-Leninism in strict observance. Communists are becoming Euro-Communists. Marxism, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote 20 years ago (about Georg Lukács, curiously enough) is becoming "Western." Left-wing intellectuals in Rome and Paris draw up radical manifestos for new freedoms—ex-Gulag dissidents, fresh from the East, murmur in anguish: Have they no eyes to see or ears to hear . . . ?

I do not deny that it is still possible today to take up some of Marx's arguments in order to criticise the economies and societies of Western Europe. But these arguments, and indeed the very words, are to be found everywhere; one would not really have to borrow them from a contemporary of early capitalism if one did not wish to prove one's Left-wing conformism. Does not this curious obsession with Marxism above all reflect that familiar "alienation" and indeed that historic defection of the intellectuals which heralds the fall of régimes, progressively weakened by their loss of legitimacy?

A SOCIETY IS IN DANGER of becoming its own victim when it is not able to answer the challenge of events in the spirit of its own principles and methods. After the miraculous growth of the post-War period, three new problems emerged: (*1*) *stagflation*, a combination of failing or paralysed growth and endemic inflation; (*2*) the *Weimar* syndrome, in other words a situation where the electoral structure of a democracy can only offer the choice between two forms of suicide: either by giving power to those who will destroy it, or by violating its own principle of legitimacy; and (*3*) a *crisis of civilisation*, marked by invective against "repression" in a society which is above all *permissive*.

Marxists, but also in a more general way liberals and progressives, reject the possibility of a conflict between hopeful aspirations and the course of history. The Marxists stand out among the progressives by their affirmation of the scientific nature of this confidence in the harmony of human interests and social facts, and by postulating a catastrophic revolutionary transition between the present and the future, between hateful capitalism and harmonious socialism. I do not share their confidence. I do not know what the future will be like. I do my best, with pen and words, to see that it shall reflect our hopes as much as possible. I do not think that it will ever eliminate antagonisms or embody our dreams. Those who lived in the time of Hitler or Stalin know that the worst is always possible; keeping faith means to believe that it is not always certain.

Myths After Solzhenitsyn

THE EPOCH AFTER THE REVOLUTION of 1917 was marked by two great pseudo-scientific myths. What now remains of these two myths: Marxism (the destruction of capitalism, by its internal contradiction), and Marxism-Leninism (the transfiguration of society, and indeed of *la condition humaine*, through the abolition of private ownership of the means of production)? At the risk of rousing the irony of Parisian Marxists, why not quote here that part of Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to Soviet Leaders** in which he demonstrates the failure of Marxism (or of Marxism-Leninism), a "decrepit doctrine", which has "aged beyond repair", and which, even in the few decades when it was at its height, was proved wrong in all its predictions, and which "has never been a science."

1. "[Ideology] was mistaken when it forecast that the proletariat would be endlessly oppressed and would never achieve anything in a bourgeois democracy. . . . " One cannot maintain, without being absurd, that the working class has not benefited from the economic development of capitalist societies.

2. "It missed the point when it asserted that the prosperity of the European countries depended on their colonies. It was only after they had shaken the colonies off that they began to accomplish their 'economic miracles'." There again, in the face of all sophistry, Solzhenitsyn is right. The thesis, suggested or maintained by Marxists (in particular, Lenin), that the rise in living standards of the upper level of the proletariat was due to exploitation of the colonies, does not stand up when compared with the experience of a country like Holland, which drew considerable revenues from Indonesia and which has none the less succeeded in raising the living standard of its population after having lost its empire.

3. "It was mistaken through and through in its prediction that socialists could only ever come to power by an armed uprising." Marx never said this explicitly, and maybe he did not always think

* Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to Soviet Leaders* (London, Index on Censorship/Fontana, 1974).

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it. Nevertheless the Marxist-Leninists Solzhenitsyn is referring to cling to their dogmatism by decreeing that those socialist parties which attain power peacefully are guilty of "betraying socialism" and of "reforming capitalism without destroying it." Their messianism demands such a judgment: if one postulates that the transition to socialism implies a violent break, it follows that if the rupture is absent, the socialists in power have not carried out the true mission.

4. "It miscalculated in thinking that the first uprisings would take place in the advanced industrial countries—quite the reverse. And the picture of how the whole world would rapidly be overtaken by revolutions. . . ?" An argument which, for all its classical nature, cannot be refuted by what I have called *le schème du devenir historique*. Of course, one can find texts by Marx and Engels arguing that other countries will not reproduce England's experience as such and which entertain the possibility of a revolution elsewhere (*i.e.* not just in the most developed industrial societies). The fact remains that the endogenous development of capitalism, in Great Britain and the United States, is not leading towards revolutionary explosions. Yet the self-destruction of capitalism—victim of its own internal contradictions—was one of Marx's central theses, and one which his disciples always preserved until events disproved it.

5. "And the picture of how . . . states would soon wither away was sheer delusion, sheer ignorance of human nature. And as for wars being characteristic of capitalism alone and coming to an end when capitalism did—we have already witnessed the longest war of the twentieth century so far, and it was not capitalism that rejected negotiations and a truce for fifteen to twenty years; and God forbid that we should witness the bloodiest and most brutal of all mankind's wars—a war between two communist super-powers. Then there was nationalism, which this theory also buried in 1848 as a 'survival'—but find a stronger force in the world today!" Should the 15 or 20 years of Cold War actually be called "war"? Is it only the Soviet Union which refused negotiations and a truce? As for the rest, far from discouraging nationalism, socialism has strengthened it. The rivalry between the Soviet Union and China has proved, if that was necessary, that the inter-state conflicts that existed previously under capitalism have survived its demise.

6. "Marxism is not only not accurate, not only not a science, has not only failed to predict a *single event* in terms of figures, quantities, timescales or locations (something that electronic computers today do with laughable ease in the course of social forecasting, although never with the help of Marxism)—it absolutely astounds one by the economic and mechanistic crudity of its attempts to explain that most subtle of creatures, the human being, and that even more complex synthesis of millions of people, society. Only the cupidity of some, the blindness of others and a craving for *faith* on the part of still others can serve to explain this grim humour of the twentieth century: how can such a discredited and bankrupt doctrine still have so many followers in the West! In *our* country there are fewest of all left! *We* who have had a taste of it are only pretending willy-nilly. . . . "

Some Ideological History

THE MARXISM OF MARX AND ENGELS ceased after 1914 to fulfil its functions as the ideology of the Second International and of the various socialist movements. After 1917 it became the justification of the Soviet experience. From then on, its destiny was determined by the profession of Marxist-Leninist faith as such and by a society which was said to conform to this faith. There is a true homeland, to use the sacred phrase, where capitalism has disappeared because the proletariat (with the Communist Party as intermediary) has taken over the state apparatus and the means of production.

To be sure, the event did not in any way confirm the prophecy. According to most of Marx's writings, a socialist revolution could only happen after capitalism had come of age, when its contradictions had reached rupture point. The Russia of the Tsars, on the eve of the War, was in the first stages of industrialisation. Nevertheless, the faithful dug up some writings by Marx which modified or corrected the rigid nature of the historic scheme. Perhaps Russia would "skip" the capitalist stage; it might go straight from the old form of collective village property to the collective property of socialism. The orthodox analysis of the English political economy revealed the essential "ideal-typical" nature of capitalism; but it was not able to forecast its future, either within each country or in the world as a whole. The only thing which remains is the prophecy of universal socialism at some indeterminate date in the future, as a result of unforeseeable events. Russia was the "weakest link in the chain." The Bolshevik party of the Soviet Union demonstrated the possibility of first seizing power, and then building socialism, without waiting for Marx's vaunted contradictions.

Between the two World Wars, the adherents to Marxist ideology divided into two camps: the Bolsheviks (including all those who adhered to the Third International) and the Socialists or Social-Democrats, who refused to accept the

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Soviet Union as the fulfilment of the prophecy. The debate between Lenin and Kautsky today still retains its symbolic significance. It was Kautsky who pointed to the gap existing between the labour movement and socialist ambitions; and it was he who gave the intellectuals the task of bringing socialist doctrine to the proletariat, to impart to it the sense of historic mission. On the other hand, German social democracy retained democratic procedures within the party and it also demanded the increasing democratisation of institutions in Prussia and in the Hohenzollern Reich.

THE PERIOD FROM 1929 was at the same time that of *the Great Depression, the Great Purge,* and of *the Great Temptation.* In the West, millions of unemployed: everybody knew them. In the East, millions of *kulaks* deported and exterminated during the years of agricultural collectivisation: they were not known, nobody wanted to know of them. Moscow triumphantly published victorious bulletins of unprecedented rates of growth. Even after the Western economy recovered, production was not at full capacity. In 1933 Hitler installed himself in the *Reichskanzlei,* and in the face of millions of German liberals and Social-Democrats he established the Third Reich, the hierarchy of Nazi leaders and the supremacy of an Aryan race. He brought the universities and the press to heel and linked the state with a single party. "Fascism" as a political genre, and "National-Socialism" as its example, became the sole incarnation of absolute evil in the eyes of the Left.

The Great Purge—the liquidation of the Leninist old guard after what amounted to witchcraft trials, the millions of Soviet citizens imprisoned, deported or liquidated—all this the majority of the Western intelligentsia refused to see (and sometimes, when they did see it, they refused to speak of it). Hitler gave Stalin an excuse that absolved everything. To doubt the guilt of Zinoviev or Bukharin was to accuse Stalin, thus "objectively" becoming Hitler's ally, thus becoming nothing less than an "agent" of the Gestapo. The great Depression brought forth *la Grande Tentation*: the Soviet Union as model and promise. It was only a great lie, concealing the Gulag world of concentration camps, that made the Great Temptation possible.

The socialist parties, all more or less compromised in the managing of capitalist society in crisis, no longer offered transcendent hope. Even if their statutes still retained references to "the socialisation of the means of production" (and even to the dictatorship of the proletariat), they acted in accordance with Eduard Bernstein's revisionism, integrated as they were in capitalist society and constitutional democracy. Both institutions were affected by the crisis. The democratic system did not have majority governments, and the capitalist system had masses of unemployed on its hands. Most of those who still called themselves "Marxist" without adhering to Marxism-Leninism were not unaware of some of the aspects of Soviet despotism, but they seemed to have lost a sense of their place in history.

THE THIRD PERIOD of Marxist ideology started after 1945 and, for the first time, it was no longer Germany but France which became its centre and home. In Paris the philosophers, first among them Jean-Paul Sartre, declared themselves Marxists but without subscribing to Soviet dogmatics.

During the years of the Cold War, from 1946 till Nikita Khrushchev's speech in 1956, the historic circumstances differed radically from those pertaining before 1939. The German Reich no longer existed, the British empire was crumbling. When the fighting ceased, the division of the Old Continent was being drawn up. By the summer of 1945, the expression "Iron Curtain" was about to come into general usage. The Soviet Union was not so much *une expérience socialiste,* whether horrible or glorious; it was the Red Army, which brought with it occupation régimes and, by means of state authority, satellite revolutions.

Some of Europe's intellectuals who had been in the Communist party, or had cooperated with it in the struggle against Fascism, now joined the opposite camp. The majority of socialists of the old tradition (and even the majority of liberals) had hated Fascism more than Communism, and had supported, if not welcomed, the Popular Front. With Fascism eliminated and conservatism weakened, they now found themselves, whether they liked it or not, in the anti-Communist coalition. This coalition, which included all non-Communists and right-wing socialists (general hostility excluded the ex-Fascists), was most clearly defined by its hostility to Marxism-Leninism, and especially to its ideological pretension to a monopoly of total exclusive truth. Hence the widespread acceptance for the concept of *pluralism.* Support for *several* parties and for *rival* doctrines came to characterise liberal Europe. This identification between pluralism and liberalism carries its own risks. Should one give the same rights to parties who do not respect the rules of the game as one does to constitutional parties? Wouldn't the dupes have been richly conned if, losing one battle, they lost the war?

We know today—and the Communists themselves do not deny it—that in the Soviet Union the years 1945–53 were no improvement on the years of Collectivisation and the Great Purge, as

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far as harshness and cruelty went. Civilians and prisoners, handed over to the Soviet authorities by the Allies, swelled the population of the concentration camps. At no other time, except during the Great Purge, was Stalinist terror so omnipresent; at no other time did it stretch its hand so far, nor strike with the same apparent irrationality. The state set itself up as the judge of truth in biology, and the Party excommunicated geneticists. In the satellite countries, East European resistance fighters with libertarian convictions were soon sent back to the prisons they had just left.

Yet, at that very moment, the Communists and their fellow-travellers were passionately defending the "achievements of the first socialist revolution in history." If one believed them, there were no concentration camps, only camps where people were "re-educated through work." Maurice Thorez declared that the French people would never fight against the Red Army. The political ideological debate tended to reduce itself to a duel between the Communists, flanked by their fellow-travellers, and the others, which included the socialists. The elimination of the socialist parties in Eastern Europe added to the passionate anti-Communism of socialists who considered themselves followers of Jean Jaurès or Leon Blum (or Kautsky and Bernstein, or Debs and Norman Thomas, *etc.*).

Khrushchev's speech put an end to the delirium. No question now of a socialist paradise: millions of innocent people had died in the camps; millions of innocent people had confessed under torture to crimes they had never committed. Collective property, planning, economic power, and the Red Army remained. But what remained of the essential link (according to Marxism or Marxism-Leninism) between the socialist base of the economy and the classless future? Was it the proletariat that wielded power or was it the Party? If the proletariat held the reins of power, how could it tyrannise itself, send millions of its own to the camps? When had the "deviation" started? With Lenin or with Stalin? What was the Marxist explanation for the monstrous growth of a "cult of personality"?

To all these questions, Marxist-Leninists from Moscow to Paris gave only embarrassed, hesitant, disingenuous replies. Does the phrase "cult of personality" have any clear meaning, especially in a Marxist philosophy of history? It suggests that the individual, as object of the cult, bears responsibility for all the violations of so-called socialist legality. It explains the corruption of a régime in terms of the defects of an individual, without bothering to ask what "material circumstances", structural or accidental, gave one man the social possibilities to commit such political crimes.

The events of 1956—Khrushchev's Secret Speech, the Hungarian Revolution—provoked a section of the intelligentsia to desert, and weakened the Western Communists' unquestioning devotion to the Soviet Union. They also served to restore some vitality to Communist parties, inciting them to self-criticism, obliging them to stop blindly repeating Moscow's orders. The Soviet Union after Stalin, under Khrushchev and then Brezhnev, appeared more and more "normalised", *i.e.* authoritarian and bureaucratic, and quite devoid of its revolutionary aura. The spectre of the Red Army has taken over from the spectre of Communism.

WHERE ARE WE, twenty-one years later? One is tempted to reply: we must begin again at the beginning. The revelation of Stalin's crimes has not shaken the *apparatchiks* in any lasting way, in the Soviet Union or in other countries. Some of them (particularly in the USSR) knew almost everything which Khrushchev made public. The Marxist-Leninist condemnation of Stalinism remains ambiguous, hedged about with reservations. Khrushchev regretted the excessive repression which had gone with collectivisation, not collectivisation itself. He blamed Stalin for having used terrorist methods against the Party itself, he did not object to their use against other elements and parties.

At the same time, the condemnation of Stalinism favoured the spreading of different kinds of Marxism, of what I shall call the Marxist *Vulgate*. Intellectuals and activists once again, with a good conscience, took up Marx's messianic prophetism and one or other of his ideological arguments, drawing a line between themselves

and the Soviet experience. Swearing by their gods that *their* Marxism had nothing in common with the one that Solzhenitsyn despises, they continue to "Marxify" the universities, the social sciences, the political and literary magazines—naively convinced that *their* revolution will not end in the same despotism, too bent on destroying capitalist-liberal society to ask themselves any questions about the society they will build on the ruins.

In the Soviet Union, Marxism still exists, the official ideology of a bureaucratic despotism of totalitarian character. In the West, different varieties of Marxism proliferate, all more or less imaginary, fostering prejudices in favour of state planning and collectivised property, and condemning the "imperialism" of a West which has lost its colonies.

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2. *Ideocracy, or Marxism as a State Ideology*

IN THE SOVIET UNION, Marxism-Leninism is used to justify a régime which is very far from resembling socialism as Marx himself or the Marxists of the Second International imagined it. But nothing prevents Marx's thought and vocabulary from being used to reveal as much as conceal the real nature of the

Soviet régime. One only has to replace the word religion with the words Marxism-Leninism:

> Marxism-Leninism *(religion)* is the sigh of a creature overwhelmed by unhappiness, the soul of a world without heart, as it is the spirit of an epoch without spirit. It is the opium of the people. The real happiness of the people requires that Marxism-Leninism *(religion)* be suppressed as the people's illusion of happiness. To demand that we renounce all illusions about our own situation means that we should renounce a situation that needs illusions.

One could go on to quote from the same text by the young Marx:

> Criticism is no longer an absolute aim in itself, but only a means. Indignation is the essence of its moving style, denunciation is its main business.

Solzhenitsyn's criticism is seasoned with indignation but, in contrast to criticism as seen by the young Marx, it never becomes criticism as a weapon. Like the physicist, Andrey Sakharov, the writer does not preach revolution. From the Soviet experience both draw the lesson of liberalism and moderation; they do not believe that a revolution—or a counter-revolution—would succeed any better than Lenin's. On this matter, they often meet with a lack of understanding among Western intellectuals (and among certain Soviet dissidents too). By way of simplification, one could say that they see *liberal* institutions as the fullest expression of the *libertarian* will; the Left in the West which condemns the Soviet Union and Marxism-Leninism turns to some form of *gauchisme* rather than returning to liberalism.

What is still astonishing is that a doctrine which is above all Western and at the crossroads of the German, English, and French traditions, which identifies itself with freedom and equality and foresees a society without exploitation and without State authority, that this very doctrine could have become the official ideology of the most total State that history has ever known. Moreover, why was a faction which at the beginning of the century only represented one of the tendencies within the Russian Social Democratic party (affiliated to the Second International) able to seize power? Once it had seized power, why did it set up a State of such a nature that the traveller, on crossing the Soviet border, has the physical sensation of entering a different civilisation? Although the Swedish socialists held power for nearly half a century, Sweden still belongs to liberal civilisation. The Civil War and the West's military interventions may explain the initial separation between Bolshevik Russia and the West. But 60 years after the "ten days that shook the world" the separation persists, in spite of the Wartime alliance against the Third Reich. The Soviet Union's economic development, far from closing the gap, has widened it. The harshness which was ascribed to revolutionary turbulence gradually became established practice. A total State in the service of an ideology—this phenomenon, slightly modified today compared to the Stalinist phase, preserves its essence and its mystery.

The Making of the Soviet Model

WHATEVER PROGRESS has been made by the Soviet economy since the War and especially since the death of Stalin, the system and the régime, as we see them today, date from the years 1929–39—from the model of development adopted semi-consciously in 1929, though it has been modified (gradually, if partially) in response to man's resistance and the constraints of circumstance.

Compared to War Communism, authoritarian centralised planning makes two concessions to "formal freedom": the employed receive a monetary revenue; and, despite the fact that internal passports limit their freedom of movement, they are not attached to an enterprise, to a firm or factory, in the way the peasants are to the *kolkhoz* or the *sovkhoz*.

Historically, a salary in money represents a form of liberation although post-Marxism utopianism tends to give it the opposite meaning. With a certain amount of roubles at his disposal, the urban worker, or the *kolkhoz* peasant who sells his vegetables on the official free market (or on the black market), chooses what he will buy, though naturally his choice is limited by the decisions of the planners. Till now, the consumer's preferences have had only a very weak influence on the use of the means of production (or indeed on the allocation of collective resources among the different sectors). The amount of freedom on the labour market is strictly controlled; when the need arises, the authorities send workers to the regions where some "priority project" is being set up, and they simply evict people from towns which they feel are overcrowded. Nevertheless the statistics indicate that there is a considerable labour mobility from one enterprise to another, as well as a differentiation of salaries within the

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enterprise (according to the nature of the job, the particular industrial sector, or the region).

Neither the existence of money nor of monetary salaries modifies the actual character of the Soviet model. Its characteristics are determined not exclusively by the wholesale collectivisation in industry, commerce, and agriculture, but also by the inversion of the relationship between means and ends and by the fact that the Soviet planners took up and accentuated the defect which Marx and the Marxists attributed to capitalism—in other words, primitive accumulation at the expense of consumption.

AN ECONOMIC *régime*—as opposed to the *system* defined by its institutions, especially those of ownership—consists of the way it shares its collective resources among the different forms of production and among the different classes. In the abstract, economists see two "ideal" and extreme types of socialist planning. With the first type, that of full-scale planning, the central authority takes all the decisions which determine the conditions of the whole society (the will of the Party, supreme judge of efficiency and justice, would be reflected in the allocation of resources, the distribution of revenues, the type and quantity of goods produced, whether capital, intermediary or consumer goods). At the same time, the State would absorb society as such, which would, so to say, become "transparent": the leaders' thoughts would become embodied in a society where everyone would play his part beneath the gaze of all.

At the other extreme is the socialist market economy, the main features of which were described by Joseph Schumpeter. The consumers once again play the part they play in a market economy. In theory, if planning follows the indices of the market of end products, consumer demand will be less frustrated than in the Western-type "mixed economies." The planning body, the Centre of the State, would own the means of production but it would apportion these in relation to the economic subjects' choice, in other words according to consumption. To be sure, the money supply and prices would still play their part. The price of goods, as the expression of their relative scarcity, would provide the means by which the planners would become aware of the population's wishes. According to this theory there must even be "free prices" for intermediary and capital goods, thus enabling the Centre to respond to the economic subjects' demands by the rational use of resources. The State preserves the right to fix the percentage of investment in relation to the national product as well as the amount of expenditure for collective needs. Apart from that, Central State Power, as owner of the means of production with responsibility for allocating its resources, would submit its powers of choice and reason to the will of the consumers, as revealed by the movement of prices.

Neither of these pure models has ever existed, nor will they ever exist, at least in the foreseeable future. Both come up against the natural resistance of men and women and of things in general. The complexity of the economy, the number of differentiated goods, and the ingenuity of individuals defy the competence of planners, even when armed with computers. A centralised planning body never puts itself at the service of the public because the latter is not a unified body. Such a central body, or rather the few who control it, uses its power for those ends which it sees as being at once in its own interest and in the "collective" interest. There is no *logical* contradiction between the collective ownership of the means of production and consumer sovereignty; but there is both a social and a psychological incompatibility. Why should we now witness, for the first time in history, a powerful minority of such virtue that it bows before the wishes of a majority which it has the effective power to constrain?

WHICH OF THESE TWO ideal types is closest to Marx's utopia? Curious though it might seem, no one can give a definite answer. It is usually assumed that Marx was aware of the needs both of mankind and of the different classes—this presupposes either *absolute abundance* (Trotsky's myth) or a more or less *stationary economy*. But socialism (and, even more so, communism), as imagined by Marx, is seen in terms of economic plenty and not penury.

The Soviet planners, hostile to both money and prices for doctrinal reasons, ignored the consumers' wishes for reasons of necessity in 1928–39: their priority was the accelerated accumulation of capital according to Marx's own description. The example of the War Economy fitted well with this method of growth: producer goods, which in a Consumer Society constitute intermediary goods, became end-products in a Production Society. Steel as end-product and bread as intermediary product—such was the caricatural effect of putting a priority on capital accumulation in heavy industry (an accumulation which was first seen as the condition for growth and then as the means to rearmament).

Three characteristics of the Soviet economy, during the period of the Five-Year Plans, are a result of this. Since 25–30% of the national product had to go in investment, and since most transactions were made with money, the planners

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reduced the salaries given to workers and farmers. This method meant that, right up to Stalin's death, very low prices were paid for the produce from the *kolkhozes* and the *sovkhozes* which, being state institutions, had to deliver the required amount of produce in any case. The difference between the price paid to the producer and that paid by the consumer was fixed by the authorities as a means of taxation and reverted to the State. By means of this *indirect taxation* on consumer goods, the State fulfilled two of its aims: to cream off a part of the national product proportional to the needs of investment, and to establish a price system which reflected the *political will* of the planners and *not* the relative scarcity of goods.

BY TAXING TRANSACTIONS of every kind, the State modified the price system. But, according to doctrine, the planners must fix the price of producer and intermediary goods "arbitrarily." Opposition to the market "on principle" can be seen in the refusal to allow market prices. It is the central state body which, in the context of the Plan, sets the rate of exchange between goods. (If the statisticians have difficulty in determining the exact amount of the national product devoted to arms, it is because they have to under-value armaments goods in order to come up with an artificially low estimate of the proportion.)

Hostility to the anarchic nature of the market, which entails an arbitrary price system, tends also to assume a certain omniscience in the central planning body and to grant it total power. Theoretically, the annual Plan, the only thing which effectively controls the functioning of the economy, is reflected in the myriad of plans for all the different enterprises, and for the transactions between enterprises, each enterprise being obliged to fulfil certain targets, usually estimated in physical quantities (though there are uncertainties about the actual nature of these amounts).* The planners are aware of and tolerate a certain "grey market"** in transactions between one enterprise and another, in order to make it easier to fulfil the Plan and to avoid the supply difficulties which affect each enterprise when certain materials and machines are not delivered.

This kind of régime entails a radical separation between the domestic and foreign market, and hence State responsibility for imports and exports. Indeed, two national economies of this type would normally have two price systems, both perhaps equally arbitrary but not alike. But the conditions of international transactions do not conform to either of these two national systems, and it becomes necessary to invent a third. Indeed, since the existence of a "world socialist market", this third system has been borrowed from the capitalist economies and expressed in convertible money (the dollar). For political reasons, and for reasons of prestige, the Soviet leaders would like to make the rouble convertible and, within COMECON, to go beyond bilateral exchanges and create a situation of multilateral compensation. This aim could only be realised if the convertible rouble was used in international transactions, and was in fact a substitute, a conventional equivalent, for the dollar.

In theory, the purchasing power made available by means of the remuneration given to peasants, workers, and officials should be equal to the value of consumer goods put at the consumers' disposal. In reality, this balance is never achieved and, from the start of the Five-Year Plans, inflation has persisted: inflation, that is, in the common sense of the term—too much money going after too few goods at set prices. But as the prices do not react to over-demand, the planners are not aware, or are only aware after a long delay (and when they become aware, they refuse to take it into account), of the use consumers make of their pay. Over-demand provokes a rise of prices as a whole; the queues at shop entrances bear witness, in their own way, to the disparity between the goods available and the ways in which individual households prefer to allocate their money. But neither inflation, nor the lack of certain goods, nor supply difficulties, exercises the same effect on an economy of the Soviet type as on an economy of the Western type.

ONE MUST NEVER FORGET the orginal idea of these priorities. The fact that there is a "black market" for theatre tickets, for works of art or even for meat, and a "grey market" for building materials —such imperfections of reality (some welcomed, others tolerated) do not hold back the accumulation of capital, the growth of heavy industry and arms production. The danger which hangs over this politicised economy is, in turn, political: the resistance of peasants and absenteeism or sheer laziness among workers. During the first Five-Year Plans, Stalin stepped up both moral exhortation (Stakhanovism) and material incentives (wage differences increased during the 1930s); the Leninist principle that Party men should not be paid any more than a qualified worker was discarded, indeed condemned as "petit-bourgeois."

* To take a common example: should one specify a given weight of nails (when the enterprise will only produce big ones) or a given number (when the factory will only produce small ones)?

** This free market, which is tolerated though alternately considered legal and illegal, is indispensable in alleviating planning deficiencies.

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In the Soviet zones, after 1945, the revolts in East Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), Poland (1956, 1970, 1976), and Czechoslovakia (1968), spontaneously assumed a political character—not only because national power seemed to be Moscow's prisoner but also because the protests against low living standards and price rises were directed against the party's leaders and their decisions. Since strikes are forbidden, every strike becomes a rebellion.

In 1945, the Soviets took the model worked out in the 1930s sufficiently seriously to impose it on the East European countries liberated by the Red Army, in which the Marxist-Leninist parties had seized power. They tolerated and even recommended less inhumane methods in agricultural collectivisation. (In Poland, today, individual ownership still predominates.) Nevertheless, taken as a whole, they acted as though they wanted to transform each of the "people's democracies" into a Soviet Union on a reduced scale: total collectivisation; authoritarian centralised planning; priority for heavy industry; an arbitrary price system; reduction of purchasing power; the raising of resources necessary to the State by means of taxation on all consumer goods. The Stalinist régime, which was a compromise between utopia, a war economy, and experience, was elevated into a model of socialism.

Such a régime does not exclude the possibility of changes and reforms, whether it is reform of investments or consumption, of the relations between the enterprise and the central planning bodies, the price system or trade with the West. Yet, despite this, the system in the Soviet Union remains essentially the same, and the principles of the régime resist all attempts at reform, the moment such attempts touch the essentials. At the same time, the states of Eastern Europe have all more or less modified, made more supple, or improved the Stalinist model.

Interpreting Stalinism

THE DEBATE ON Stalinism, in which the Marxist-Leninists refuse to join, putting all the responsibility on one man in spite of their own de-personalised theory of history, suffers from confusion, even in the West. We have first, and above all, to define what we mean by Stalinism, or more precisely, what the phenomena are which became evident in the Soviet Union from the time when Stalin enjoyed absolute power, those phenomena for which the Soviet dictator is now held exclusively responsible.

From 1930 or 1931 (or, if one wants to reduce the Stalinist period to a minimum, from the period of the Great Trials and the liquidation of the Old Guard) till the death of Stalin in 1953, the power of the Party, essentially collegial even at the time when Lenin imposed his wishes on his comrades, was submitted to the unquestionable authority of one man. He—according to Marxist-Leninists, according to his comrades and his successors—acted as a tyrant, reigned through fear, violated the laws of heaven and earth. At the same time, he concealed himself behind a curtain of lies and organised a cult of his own grandeur and beneficence.

The Stalinist phase of the Soviet experience definitely presents certain peculiarities compared to the periods that went before and after it. Neither Lenin, nor Khrushchev, nor Brezhnev terrorised their comrades in the Politburo in the way that Stalin did for more than twenty years. No one, neither the founder nor the heirs, accused those close to them of committing treason to the benefit of the secret services of Berlin, Paris and London (not to mention Washington). Imre Nagy was shot, without a public trial, after 1956; Dubcek survives in the shadows since 1968. The Bolsheviks in the Politburo detest Stalinism in retrospect and fear it with good reason, for its characteristic was to apply to themselves methods that they consider legitimate only when applied to the Socialist Revolutionaries, socialists, and the Mensheviks.

SHOULD ONE CONCLUDE that Lenin had in him the seeds of Stalin, that 1917 led *of necessity* to the collectivisation of agriculture and to the Gulag? One can, I think, argue the opposite thesis as long as one limits it carefully. The centralisation of authority in the Politburo of the Central Committee gave the Secretary-General the chance to put his men in key positions and to assure himself gradually of an automatic majority in the Central Committee, then in the Politburo. At the same time he possessed legal authority which he could exercise tyrannically through the police. The vengeance wreaked against the old comrades-in-arms, the confessional ceremonies, the condemnation of genetics, the songs which one could whistle in praise of Number One, all these belong to Stalin—although such a bureaucratic despotism could, from one day to the next, have thrown up another tyrant.

Once one has made this concession to the partial abnormality of Stalinism, the continuity of Sovietism stands out even more clearly. War Communism did not display much more humaneness to the peasants than did collectivisation. Foreign engineers, accused of "sabotage", also confessed to crimes they had not committed. Lenin had no more doubts than Stalin about being the embodiment of "the Proletariat"; and he attacked those who did not subscribe to this

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paranoid faith just as mercilessly. The evil nature of commercial exchange, the "exploitation of man by man" as implicit in all individual ownership, the obsession with industrial giantism, and the hatred of the peasantry—all these Bolshevik dogmas, inspired by a mixture of fanaticism and ignorance, can be found in Lenin just as much as in Stalin. As for the militarisation of the factories and work discipline, it was Trotsky who initiated them, and he was loud and eloquent in singing the praises of accelerated industrialisation.

In other words, without saying that Trotsky would have acted in the same way had he been in Stalin's place, the fact remains that the Plan for forced industrialisation, the refusal to tolerate individual ownership, and the upheavals in agriculture go with the grain of Bolshevism and Leninism. The Five-Year Plans, even if they did not logically imply collectivisation, spring from the same inspiration, the same ideology.

AT THE TIME OF the 50th anniversary of the 1917 revolution, certain journalists of the "bourgeois press" vied with each other to praise the greatness of the man who had lived for the revolution alone, in the hope of destroying liberal capitalist society once and for all. The death of Mao Tse-tung occasioned the same grotesque tributes. Indeed, if one calls men who have left their mark on a period "great", then both of them belong to this category, both of them are numbered among the "heroes of history." And so does Stalin, for that matter. After all Mao was carrying on the line of those who had liberated and unified the Chinese Empire. However one judges the way that Mao exercised power—the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution—no one belittles the epic Long March, the revolutionary mobilisation of the peasantry, the restoration of the Imperial Unity of the Central Kingdom in the name of the doctrine borrowed from the West and adapted to Chinese needs.

In the Russian Empire, the Bolsheviks' seizure of power, favoured as it was by the state of disorganisation created by World War I and by the abdication of the Tsar, changed the course of history. It is constantly being said that backward Russia, on the eve of the War, did not number among the industrialised countries. This claim is more false than true. Although it was relatively "undeveloped" compared to Western Europe and the USA, it was developing rapidly, particularly after 1880. It has been calculated that the annual rate of growth of industrial production between 1888 and 1913 rose to around 5% a year (a high rate for that period, and higher than that of Great Britain or even of Germany). Agricultural production rose by 2% a year between 1861 and 1913 (which, with the rise in population, meant only a meagre increase in food resources per capita). Between 1880 and 1913, the national product rose at a rate of around 2.5%—a figure which was lower than that of the USA, and Germany, but higher than that of France and Great Britain. Economists at the time were repeatedly predicting that by the middle of the 20th century "Russia will dominate Europe".

If there had not been a War, would Tsarist Russia have been able to modernise both the economy and the State without a revolution? It is pointless to speculate about history that never happened. But it is despicable to adore success alone, to decree that what happened was written in advance and in keeping with reason. The Bolsheviks, as professional revolutionaries, threw our century into confusion; but, for all that, Lenin was no great spirit. His hate and his ignorance cost his people tens of millions of dead. Today, 60 years after he seized power, we still have to struggle against his aberrations. When the French socialists, François Mitterand and Michel Rocard, pretend that collective ownership does not mean the suppression of the market and the price mechanism, the commentators start heralding the coming miracle, a kind of cultural revolution.

NONE OF THE SOVIET LEADERS belonged to the intellectual élite of Russia, even if they were members of the *intelligentsia* in the Russian sense of the word. To take only one case, that of Lenin, it takes the masochism or the *mauvaise foi* of a Paris professor to re-canonise Lenin's philosophical works. His so-called theoretical works, *Imperialism: The Final Stage of Capitalism* and *State and Revolution*, both belong to the literature of propaganda. The former should be placed along with the *Communist Manifesto* (if one notch below). As for the latter, the reader has only to look at it for himself to be able to judge the extraordinary deformation of reality initiated by this great simplifier, praised by his admirers for his realism in the political battle.

The "giants" of the French Revolution, Danton, Saint-Just and Robespierre, also lived through events that were greater than themselves. Their writings are now of interest only to erudite specialists; none of them is noted for original thought. From the members of the *Constituante* of 1789 to the Jacobins, from the reformers to the extremists, the level of political reflection sinks and both passion and violence mount. The Jacobins have benefited from the admiration which the French feel for *la Grande Révolution*; they possessed many of the talents necessary to despotism, camouflaged by the invocation of *la Liberté*. The Bolsheviks outdid the Jacobins by far, in their unconditional faith,

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in their determination to conquer (even at the price of as yet inconceivable forms of violence).

IT COULD BE OBJECTED that I have not taken the Civil War into account, the foreign interventions which pushed the Bolsheviks towards violence and isolation. The seizure of power by a minority party, in a hurry to take back from the peasantry what it had just given them, could hardly set up a new régime without bloodshed. The Mensheviks saw the inevitability of civil strife and despotism.

When all is said and done, I think the vicissitudes of the Civil War, *etc.*, do not account for the aberrations of the Five-Year Plans and the collectivisation of agriculture, for the Gulag and the Great Lie. Whether it is a question of War Communism or of Collectivisation, the same combination of causes can be seen: the city dwellers and the soldiers must be fed; the leaders hate the landed peasants; they do not believe in the effectiveness of material incentives (condemned for ideological reasons anyway). Twice they sent the Army to harvest the grain for which they refused to pay a realistic price, in one case because they did not have the money, in the other because they had earmarked all their resources for industrialisation.

Once again, let us be quite clear about what made the Stalinist period exceptional. First, there is the exaggeration of the methods which go back to Leninism. The camps, the secret police, the terror—the truth about these things is finally being accepted—made their appearance immediately after the Bolsheviks seized power. But after the relaxation of the NEP, Stalin revived and accentuated the harshness of War Communism because he wanted to cream off a significant proportion of the harvest (and thus create the type of production relations in the countryside that would ensure the deliveries demanded by the State). For the peasantry, collectivisation seemed not so much a retreat from War Communism as a systematic organisation of *requisitions* under the guise of "collective ownership." All those who resisted this "second revolution" became "enemies of the state" in their turn.

THE ORIGINALITY OF STALINISM must also be seen in the Great Purge: in the liquidation of thousands, of tens of thousands, of Party members, especially Lenin's closest comrades; in the arrest of millions upon millions of Soviet citizens, both civil and military; in the swelling population of the labour camps. Stalinist Collectivisation (accompanied by the deportation of the *kulaks*) does not differ in any fundamental way from the Leninist requisitioning of harvests. On the other hand, if Bolshevik terror *can* lead to Stalinist terror, I do not see that it must do so of *necessity*. Lenin made Stalin possible, not inevitable. Once again the history of Bolshevism refutes the very theory of history which its followers hold. Trotsky wrote, after the event, that without Lenin the revolution would never have taken place; equally, it is possible that, without Stalin, the Russian people would have been spared the extremes of the Great Purge.

There was no need to populate the Gulag with some ten million concentration-camp prisoners in order to create a climate of fear. There was no need to send thousands of officers to the camps to guarantee the loyalty of the Army; quite the contrary, the Army, decimated and with some of its best generals eliminated, was weakened. They had to search the camps for the officers who were to win the war.

THUS, WITH suitable humility, I put forward my interpretation of Stalinism, both to the Marxist-Leninists and to their opponents. The period 1929–36, the collectivisation of agriculture, and the deportation of the Kulaks take their place, without much difficulty, in an "improved" Leninism. The Great Purge, the stepping-up of repression after the War-time victories, cannot be explained if one does not take the *Vozhdzh*'s character into account, any more than one can explain the fact that the Russian proletariat supposedly sent millions of its own to the camps, or the fact that the Party eliminated some tens of thousands of its members, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy. Stalinism is neither characterised nor explained by "the cult of personality"; it is defined by the concentration of the Party's power in the hands of one man, who, in turn, used the secret police against everyone, including his most faithful followers. The glorification of this cult-leader is not the cause of illegality and terrorism, it is merely a cover for it, an extreme example of the ideological camouflage and of the lie that began with the seizure of power in October 1917. Since the Proletariat, which was supposed to have taken power, does not exist and is only a myth, anybody—even Stalin—can be its embodiment.

In one of his moments of lucidity, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote (in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*): "It is *true* that Stalin was the Party and the State, or rather that the Party and the State were Stalin." And again: "Historical experience has unquestionably shown that the first phase of the construction of a socialist society could not be other—if one considers it on the level of abstract power—than the indissoluble linking of bureaucracy, the Terror and the personality cult." A possible and real link: but was it necessary? The reply is left hanging in the air, and

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this alone ought to persuade the European Leninists to abandon their arm-chair dreams of a new 1917.

The Model Survives

WHY GO BACK to the past, a past that is over and done with? It is understandable that Solzhenitsyn should call upon the Soviet leaders to admit the crimes of those who handed power on to them: in doing so, the *Zek* is expressing the victims' sufferings, the indignation of a patriot, the compassion of a Christian, devotion to human justice. Politically, Brezhnev (or whoever succeeds him) has no interest in going back over events which are hardly compatible with the myth of the Party's infallibility. What is important is present Soviet reality and its future. The Bolsheviks, who started out with a double utopia—the dictatorship of the proletariat and total planning—have finally built an Industrial Society, call it if you wish "state socialism", a powerful economy which supports a vast military establishment on a level with that of the USA.

Let the reader first remember that Russian exile in Switzerland, who watched out for the signs of destiny each day and then returned via the Finland Station after the Tsar's abdication. Then let him contemplate the present system of inter-state relations: the Soviet Union, now a super-power, rules over Eastern Europe through the Marxist-Leninist parties; the Communist Parties of Western Europe may be distancing themselves from the Red capital but they remain linked to it by a common faith. Throughout the world millions of men and women (and adolescents) continue to admire the Promethean feat of 1917 and the heroes of Bolshevism. How can one challenge the judgment of history, that tribunal which judges not of morality but of success?

TODAY IN THE SOVIET UNION more coal and all other forms of energy resources are being produced than in the USA. Steel production is more than double the 60 million tons set by Stalin in 1945 to ensure the country's independence and security. On the other hand, the average monthly pay (excluding those employed on collective farms) rose to 135 roubles in 1973, according to an American estimate fairly favourable to the Soviet régime. If one converts this (at the official rate of just under a dollar to the rouble) it still represents an average pay well below the level of the minimum French pay. The Soviet authorities' violent reaction to the French president's speech on television was not prompted by statistical details—the difference in the exchange rate he quoted, putting the French minimum wage at 320 roubles, as compared to the exchange rate quoted by the Soviet authorities, which put it at 280 roubles. In either case, the contrast between the power of the Soviet state and the poverty of its subjects was strikingly obvious.

Let us look at another statistical survey, published by the World Bank in 1975. In the German Democratic Republic the gross national product per capita rose to $3,000 with an annual rate of growth of 3.2% between 1960 and 1973 (2.9% between 1965 and 1973). The corresponding figures for the Soviet Union were $2,030 and 3.6% (3.5% for 1965–73); for France: $4,540 and 4.7% (5.0% between 1965–73). Even in the zone it controls, the Soviet Union is lagging behind some of the people's democracies.

Even more telling than these overall figures (which are always open to doubt) are reports from those who have lived or live in Moscow, one of the more favoured of Soviet cities. Such evidence leaves us in no doubt as to the basic facts: the uncertain and irregular food supply, the rush on shops that have announced the arrival of this or that type of goods, the lack of housing.

But one must be careful not to exaggerate in the opposite direction. The statistics show a regular rise in wages for all categories of workers. The increase between 1966–1973 varies between 19% for employees of state institutions, 61% for the employees of state farms, and 78% for those employed on the *kolkhozes*. (I must add, however, that in 1965 the last two categories had an average wage of 72 roubles and 48 roubles respectively. These average wages are still below French minimum wages.)

I SHALL BE TAKING a more detailed look at the performance of the Soviet economy as compared to that of the Western economies. For the moment, I restrict myself to the main features of what is called the Soviet model or "Sovietism" (a paradoxical description since "the Soviets", the expression of the spontaneity of the soldiers, workers, and the masses in general, were practically abolished in 1918).

This model has three main features: (*1*) the reduction of private ownership to the minimum, in all spheres (including agriculture, crafts and trade); (*2*) authoritarian centralised planning, with strictly limited concessions to the independence of enterprises and the initiative of managers; and, finally, (*3*) the use of the planners' unlimited power to ensure priority supplies to the economy's number one sector, the rapid accumulation of capital. In this scheme of things mass consumption is reduced by the high level of investment and armament production, while the taxation on turnover serves to reduce overall consumption.

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In the case of the USSR these three main features constitute a system in the sense that they established themselves at the same time, in the period of the first Five-Year Plans—the first two by a kind of unstable compromise between ideology and experience, the last inspired by the ends which the Marxist-Leninists set themselves and also in answer to an external threat.

What are the advantages in the abstract of such a model? It would seem that there are two: (1) resources can be concentrated in those sectors of the economy which the planners see as priorities; (2) it raises the necessary capital for investment by taxing turnover or enterprise profits rather than individual savings. In the West savings play only a small part in financing investments; but self-financing, in the case of private enterprises, creates the risk of confusing "profits" earmarked for modernising or developing the means of production, and "profits" which increase revenues, and thus the consumption and patrimony of private persons. In the case of large enterprises, only the ill-informed would suffer from confusion on this issue: the dividends shared out represent only a very small percentage of company turnover and even of gross profits (before repayment of interest and ploughing back of profits). The fact remains that to argue in favour of "profit", of profitable business enterprise, in a mixed economy inevitably arouses suspicion. Investment depends on business profits; but so do the fortunes of the rich.

Strictly speaking, in an economy of the Soviet type, all revenues could go back into salaries, and the planners could reduce wage inequality for the population as a whole (while at the same time retaining substantial advantages for minorities favoured for political reasons). The reduction of all revenue to wages is not pursued to the end in the Soviet Union because of the existence of peasants' private plots, the officially tolerated grey market, and the black market. On the other hand, as far as the *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* are concerned, differences in pay spring from geographic and climatic variations, from the differing fertility of the land and from more or less inefficient organisation. Nevertheless, public ownership in the economy does obviously prevent the amassing of large individual fortunes and gives the planners the chance, providing they are prepared to use it, to change the relation between lower and higher wages.

THE SIMPLE—indeed the primitive—character of the model does not safeguard it against inflation and fluctuations. But the former does not cut enterprise profits to the point where productive investments are affected; and fluctuations do not entail a visible drop in production, or visible unemployment. Enterprises are overmanned without risking bankruptcy. In the West unemployment is visible and obvious because enterprises have to balance their accounts, and to make profits in order to service equipment and machinery. By encouraging firms to "pay more" to the workers in 1974–75, the French government was mortgaging the economy's recovery; firms lacked the financial resources for investment and were hesitant about taking on new labour.

As for the planners' omnipotence under this kind of régime, one has only to consider agricultural collectivisation to see its lethal dangers. In the eyes of the Third World, capital accumulation and the speed of industrialisation seem to justify total planning power. But both arguments, for and against, neglect the real issues.

1. To what extent has experience shown this model to be economically efficient? I will try to answer this question in the next section.

2. Does this model necessarily imply a single Party and an ideocracy? The experience of the Soviet Union does not enable us to give a categorical answer. It is true that the model was established on the basis of an ideology which claimed a monopoly. The less the realities conformed to the aims of those who built up this model, the less they were prepared to tolerate dissent or criticism. It is not planning of the Soviet type as such which excludes personal and intellectual freedom; it is the Marxist-Leninists themselves, who used this type of planning while at the same time imposing their dogmas on a population at first rebellious, then passive, and, finally, sceptical.

DOES THIS MEAN that Soviet-type planning excludes today the possibility of any liberalisation? A relaxation of centralised authority in the Soviet Union would probably improve the economy's performance. Some of the East European countries (Hungary, in particular) are flirting discreetly with a market economy. Others (for example the East German Democratic Republic, which has relations with the West German Federal Republic) have managed to make the economy work in tolerable fashion. Making the economic system more flexible would not endanger One-Party rule in spite of a kind of elective affinity between a consumer's freedom of choice and a citizen's independence.

On the other hand, no Western country could adopt a similar model without going through a prolonged period of despotism. Centralised planning within the national framework, with its system of arbitrary prices, means breaking away from the world market. French industry works one-and-a-half days a week for export; so does

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Italian industry. Neither Italy nor France could leave the European-Atlantic community, either to join COMECON, or to turn inward on itself. In both cases it would entail ordeals incompatible with the survival of its liberal institutions.

3. Are collective ownership and/or planning compatible with our liberties? Friedrich Hayek argues in *The Road to Serfdom* that they are not. Joseph Schumpeter argued that they are. But Schumpeter supposed that planning would be rational and based on the price of end products on the market—a system more easily imagined by an economist than a sociologist. He did not assume that private individual ownership would be abolished in the sphere of crafts and trade, where it is probably irreplaceable.

In any case, there is no space to discuss the question within this framework. At the most one might suggest that the United Kingdom, over the next few years, will be providing us with a kind of laboratory experiment. One of the ways that the British government might take, in order to arrest decline, has currently been dubbed the "Corporate State" or *corporatism*. It is an ill-defined concept which excludes both Sovietism and the Mixed Market economy. Firms would not all become state-owned but major decisions, in individual businesses and in the economy as a whole, would be made on the basis of a negotiated agreement between managers and trade-union leaders, between the industrial employers' association and the trade unions. Would such a system preserve the liberal tradition? Even in Great Britain, I doubt whether such a system would respect the individual's rights. A plurality of collective powers would survive: none of these would worry about individuals. The "closed shop" would become the rule.

4. As far as the countries of the Third World are concerned, is the Soviet model of general, if not universal, value? Before answering this question, I should like to point out that no one argues that the Soviet model is suitable for countries that have already industrialised. And these pages are meant for Western Europe, not for India or Angola. It would be the height of absurdity to take a method which favours forced accumulation of capital as a model for a country which already enjoys a high living standard.

Yet, even in the countries of the Third World, the Soviet model has spread more false than true ideas. As it is, the rise of a state to the rank of one of the world's two Super-powers inevitably seems to prove the merits of its chosen method. The minorities which wield power in the new states no longer worry about "liberal values", partly as a result of Soviet experience. They conclude that the priority requirement of growth is met by accumulation of capital in heavy industry.

This priority, in turn, is expressed in three formulas: priority of industry over agriculture; of heavy industry over light industry; of grand projects over modest ones. As it is, this order of priorities (which might be justified in countries which aim for power rather than welfare) loses all meaning in most Third World countries, where the development of agricultural resources and the transformation of the countryside offer the only means of preventing the flow of labour to the cancerous cities where they cannot find employment. In spite of the lack of capital and the abundance of manpower, the planners, out of imitation and ideological conviction, choose investments which offer little employment and use large amounts of capital.

EVEN IN THE USSR, which at the outset had a relatively high level of agricultural production per capita (by using intensive agriculture or by cultivating hitherto unused land), the method chosen has meant two famines and the oppression of the peasantry by collective organisation. This combination of circumstances, quite apart from ideological quarrels, explains why Communist China chose another course. Providing everyone with "a bowl of rice" quite logically became the priority rather than the Soviet aim of supplying food to the cities by every means available. As far as one can judge from the outside, agricultural collectivisation in both cases has meant strict control of the masses by the political-ideological authorities (though in the case of China psychological manipulation seems to have played a greater part in this control than the local police). However, unlike the peasants of the first Five-Year Plans, the Chinese peasant is not deprived of all incentive to work. The Commune permits the individual to reap some benefits from his efforts.

THE READER SHOULD NOT mistake the meaning of these remarks. The only thesis to which I would hold on the question of "development strategy" is that no model is universally valid. The priorities implied in the Soviet model do not seem to me to be suitable for sub-Sahara Africa and do not meet rational requirements in Asia or the Americas.

Finally, and above all, there is one thing we must not forget: just as people in the West only retain a kind of Marxist VULGATE, so the Third World borrows from the Soviet Union not a method with all its elements intact (including Party, Police, and Ideology), but a VULGATE of development strategy, a sort of semi-doctrinal conglomeration, one-quarter half-truths and three-quarters errors.

The Empire of the Tsars, at the beginning of

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the 19th century, ranked among the top powers in Europe, and Cossacks once camped on the Champs-Elysées. In all events, it would have become industrialised in the 20th century, and by reason of its size and population, its power would have weighed on the more advanced, though less populous, rival nations of Western Europe. It was Hitler's follies that gave this Empire, by then the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the chance to fulfil those soaring ambitions of which Karl Marx constantly warned the governments of his day. The Russian Army did not withdraw from the "liberated" countries as it had done in 1815. Russian troops progressed right up to the line drawn up quite thoughtlessly by the Big Three ambassadors during the last War. The alliance of the Big Three did not continue as a Holy Alliance or as a *Directoire*. The Holy Alliance, at least, took in only those governments of Eastern Europe which had come to power because of the presence or proximity of the Russian army.

I CAN ONLY CONCLUDE **that Marxism-Leninism has indeed made a decisive contribution to Moscow's imperial fortunes. Only leaders who subscribe to a universal ideology could, in the eyes of the world and perhaps their own, transfigure a revolution imposed from above. A military protectorate has become a socialist community.**

3. *Who Plans the Planners?*

THE SUPERIORITY OF **The Mixed Economies over Sovietism seems to me to give rise to two objections and to one misunderstanding. *Justice* and *Equality* have no place in the foregoing analyses; my verdict is based on the latest results rather than on evolutionary tendencies. On the other side of the coin, the poverty of its performance does not necessarily herald, as some writers believe, the collapse of the Soviet régime or the disintegration of the Imperial Zone.***

Let me concede, for the sake of argument, that the notions of Justice and of Equality coincide (although I hold their identification to be a denial of justice). Do Soviet-type régimes carry within themselves less inequality, either in fact or in potential, than Market societies, or even than Mixed régimes?

Social differentiation—between peasants and urban workers, blue- and white-collar workers, Party members and non-travellers, the upper levels of the State bureaucracy, the Party, the intelligentsia, and the majority—is to be found in the East as in the West, in spite of features peculiar to each of the types of society. Accumulations of inherited wealth—those of the Rothschilds, the Rockefellers, the Dassaults—do not exist on the other side of the demarcation line. The privileged have *dachas*, not *châteaux*. In the absence of private ownership of the means of production, and of direct or intermediary ownership of real property, the fortunes of the founder capitalists or the *anciens riches* cannot be restored. The impact of these fortunes on the income of the masses, if not always on public opinion, is insignificant.

The criterion of inequality most commonly used at present is to compare the average income of the highest-paid 10% with that of the 10% at the bottom of the hierarchy. This ratio, which in the Stalin era would have been upwards of 7, is considered to have fallen from 4.4 in 1956 to 3.7 in 1964 and to 3.2 in 1970.** After tax, this ratio would come to 6.7 in the United States in 1968 as against 3.0 for Eastern Europe as a whole.

However approximate these figures may be, there seems no doubt that the Soviet leadership, also for ideological reasons, has set its sights on reducing inequality—or, perhaps, we might call it closing the salary loop-hole which Stalin threw wide open in the era when he was denouncing the "petty bourgeois cult of egalitarianism." In the course of this same period the gap between the average wage of the *sovkhozniks* or *kolkhozniks* and of urban blue- or white-collar workers has also narrowed: from 59% in 1960, the average wage of the *sovkhoznik* is reported to have reached in 1973 77% of the average urban employee's wage; during the same period the same arithmetic gives a rise from 31 to 56% for the *kolkhoznik*.

In addition to the disparity between peasants' incomes and the incomes of blue- and white-collar workers, there is a further disparity in the income of *kolkhozniks* from one Republic to the next, and still more from one district to the next within the various Republics. Remuneration-per-active-*kolkhoznik* varies between 188 for the Turkmen Republic (Soviet Union=100) and 64

* See Emmanuel Todd's lively book, *La chute finale* (Paris, Laffont, 1976).

** These figures are taken from Peter Wiles' "Recent Data on Soviet Income Distribution", *Survey* (Summer 1976). The *kolkhozniks* and *sovkhozniks* are not included.

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for Belorussia. In 1965 the *kolkhoznik*'s pay for a day's work had the following distribution: 11.1% of *kolkhozniks* received less than 1 rouble, 3.8 received 1 rouble, 10.2 from 1 to 1.5 roubles, 19.1 from 1.5 to 2 roubles, 55.8 more than 2 roubles (in other words more than £1.15 a day).

Of Facts & Figures

THIS TENDENCY towards reducing the income range does not entail reducing the material and moral advantages enjoyed by members of the Party, especially its top managers. Their accommodation, their cars, their access to shops reserved for the dignitaries of the régime, all these create a gulf between the privileged and the many. The difference in incomes does not reflect the difference in conditions. The isolation of the élite, in the strict sense of the term, the concentration of these VIPs in particular neighbourhoods, and the proximity of the *dachas* where their paths cross again when they leave the capital—all these factors prompt many writers to employ the notion of *caste* rather than of *class*. Two distinctions seem crucial in the structure of Soviet societies: those between rural and urban workers, and between the mass of the population and the Power Elite (an expression which I prefer to that of Djilas's New Class).

Since the early 1960s the Soviet leadership has made decided efforts to reduce the gap in living standards between blue- and white-collar workers, on the one hand, and *kolkhozniks* and *sovkhozniks* on the other. In spite of everything, that gap remains similar today to what it was more than 60 years ago, under the Tsarist régime—at 1.8 instead of 2. Add to this the fact that even today the peasants derive about 27% of their income from the work they put into their own private plots of land, although when the authorities improved the pay level for collective work they were trying to lower the amount of private labour. On top of that, two-fifths of blue- and white-collar workers own individual allotments and account for nearly 50% of private fruit and vegetable production.

THE INEQUALITY WITHIN the peasant population persists, too, because it relates to natural conditions as well as to the varying degrees of efficiency of organisation and labour. This inequality is all the more inevitable seeing that the Soviet Union—more an Empire than a Nation—stretches from the East German frontiers to the shores of the Pacific, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and that it brings together under one and the same law territories that differ in the ethnic character of their population as well as in geographical conditions and soil fertility. The table of the differences in remuneration (both in cash and in kind per active *kolkhoznik* according to the various Federal Republics) does not suggest any simple idea or general proposition. In 1963, work on the *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* was better paid in the socialist republics of Asia than in those of Europe (excluding Estonia). Was this a matter of favours temporarily extended to those Asiatic republics which had previously been ill-treated, or a consequence of the nature of the products? Do *kolkhozes* in the more industrialised regions—the Russian and Ukrainian Republics—suffer from the continuing poverty of the land, the emigration of the more active elements into the towns, and from the proximity of the urban planning agencies? I admit that the present state of my own information, and possibly of the information available, does not enable me to answer these questions.

At any rate, the heterogeneity of the Soviet republics which together make up one continuous terrestrial empire is also and quite naturally matched by differentiation in ways of life and, if we are to import a quantitative expression, in inequality. What constitutes the major fact about the post-Stalin period is that the State and Party leadership has been operating a policy of reducing the inequalities among the various groups which make the body social (blue- and white-collar workers, non-manual workers and various grades of technicians), yet without so much as touching upon the numerous material and moral advantages of the small minority, between a half and three-quarters of a million, which constitutes the élite in the strict sense of Pareto.*

COMPARED WITH THE equivalent minority in the Western countries, that of the Soviet Union appears at once less wealthy and more remote from the mass. The members of this élite draw upon supplementary incomes over and above their salaries; they have access to commercial channels selling luxury goods, usually of foreign origin; they are better housed; they are cared for by their own doctors; and they have the best chance of buying a car for their private use, going on holiday, or getting a room in the best hotels. Having said all that, the rich of the United States (two-thousandths of America's taxpayers) enjoy incomes which in absolute or relative terms far exceed those of the Soviet "rich", whose wealth, being bound up with their position and their orthodoxy, is less secure and less transferable. Not that there is equality of

* On Vilfredo Pareto, see my "Men & Ideas" study in ENCOUNTER, November 1976.

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opportunity in the Soviet Union—the few statistics available on the social origins of students dispel that illusion. The differentiation of primary and secondary schools in town and country and from province to province rules out any "equality of opportunity" as between the son of a central Asian *kolkhoznik* and a Central Committee member—not to mention the inevitable influence of the "recommendations" of important people on the day of the university entrance exam which will decide those sons' fates.

EGALITARIAN IDEOLOGY and the all-powerful position of the Party come together in the following compromise—between the average income of the upper and the lower decile, the ratio which was more than 7 in 1946 has been brought down to about 3 (3.2 in 1970, according to Peter Wiles). Which is to say appreciably less, by about a half, than the same ratio in the United States (6.7 in 1968), which is 5.9 in Italy (1968) and in Canada (1972). The regional inequalities of the USSR may well be due to the size of families. So whereas the incomes per *kolkhoznik* unit seem greater in the Asiatic republics, the "net material product"—a Soviet concept comparable to, but not identical with, that of the national income per capita—suggests an inequality at the expense of the ethnically different republics of Asia. The Russian (111) and Ukrainian (96.9) come after the three Baltic states (112, 131, 133); the republics of Asia show indices of between 60 and 80 (100 for the entire Soviet Union).

This effort to reduce inequality of incomes goes hand in hand with an attempt to raise the living standard of the whole population, peasants included. Certainly it remains undeniable and surprising that a Soviet Union producing as much (or more) steel as the United States should still be housing and feeding its citizens or subjects so poorly. The USSR continues to assign 30% of its national income to investment, some 63% of which goes into so-called "productive investment" (basically, equipment). The Defence Budget takes a 10%-to-15% share—it is hard to estimate—of the national product. The allocation of investment among the various sectors has not appreciably changed between the first Five-Year Plans and those of today, apart from fluctuations in the share absorbed by agriculture and the increased investment in construction. Heavy industry used to get 32% during the first Five-Year Plan, and it got 30% in 1972 or 1973, whereas group B (the Marxist sector II) received only 4.9% in 1973 as against 6.3% during the first Five-Year Plan. The construction industry has increased its share from 0.9% during the first Five-Year Plan to 3.7% today; on the other hand, construction itself, for both industry and housing, at 15.3%, is still at a level comparable with the 1930s (though housing must account for a larger proportion compared with the building of factories).

Likewise, the financing of socialist accumulation continues to obey the same principles. Turnover tax (*i.e.*, the tax paid by the consumer on all his purchases, which the planners raise or lower according to the availability of a given article or their wish to reduce or increase its consumption) still accounts for over 30% of the total receipts of the State, although the percentage has been declining (58.7 in 1940, 40.7 in 1960, 31.5 in 1970). On the other hand, the levy on the profits of enterprises has risen from 12.1% in 1940 to 32% in 1973. This divergent evolution of the burden of turnover tax and of the profits levy explains the unquestionable rise in the standard of living.

Affluence? Liberalisation?

TWENTY YEARS AGO, at the time when I was teaching the Sorbonne courses on Industrial Society,* I stood out both against the optimism of those who were forecasting affluence and liberalisation for the Soviet régime and against those who were advancing a thesis, Marxist in derivation, of impoverishment. Up to now, the facts have confirmed these moderate or intermediary expectations. The consumer durables—radio, television, to a lesser extent refrigerators and washing machines, and to a still lesser extent private cars—are percolating into Soviet society. That society is following, at a distance, the road opened by the European economy, just as in the case of chemicals, electronics, data-processing and most new types of weaponry Soviet industry toils in vain to overtake the industry of the United States.

In certain sectors the gap between East and West has a natural tendency to close. When 80 to 90% of Western households have their radio, TV, refrigerator and washing machine, this percentage can show little further increase; and additional income is spent on leisure activities and holidays. Similarly, there is a limit to the productivity of American agriculture; and the progress of Soviet agriculture, slow as it may be, will eventually close part of the gap. Nevertheless, the extrapolation of Soviet progress or the rate of growth of the national product, disregarding population movements and the number of people employed, produces results which are meaning-

* See my three short books: *18 Leçons sur la société industrielle* (1963), *La Lutte des classes* (1964), and *Démocratie et totalitarisme* (1965).

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less because they are arrived at by an error of method.

AS I HAVE SAID, and reiterated in different ways, Soviet growth results from the accumulation of material capital and the mobilisation of the work force. It is quantitative rather than qualitative, extensive rather than intensive. The apparent increase in the productivity of labour is the result of the increasing value of the capital employed by each worker. By the same token the productivity of the capital is decreasing. The overcapitalisation—accumulation of dead labour—in which Marx saw the cause of the decline in the profitability of capital is a prediction which is indeed being fulfilled—but in the Soviet economy. The phenomenon is understandable. The Soviet model is derived from a crude transposition of the "expanded reproduction" of *Das Kapital*. This, according to the model, was to lead to an excess of constant capital and the decline of its profitability. In the Soviet Union that decline is explained not by the fact that surplus value is levied only on dead labour (or constant capital) but by poor allocation of resources, an excess of heavy investment, and the priority maintained for the heavy sector. Furthermore, *the Planners have no valid criterion of profitability available*, since this depends on prices, which in their own turn depend on the Planners, by way of their modulation of the tax on turnover. (The meat industry is particularly profitable because the Planners want meat to be expensive.)

The nature of Soviet growth—accumulation of constant capital and mobilisation of the work force—affords a simple explanation of the decline of the growth rate during the last Five-Year Plan and the more modest targets of the 1975–80 Plan. Over the 1965–70 period the work force, not including agriculture, had expanded by 19% and the industrial work force by 15%; the Plan for 1970–75 forecast 13% and 6.5% respectively.

The realisation of the Plan would therefore have required an improvement in the growth rate of the productivity of labour and better utilisation of existing capital. That is to say, as the reserves of manpower dwindle, so intensive growth was to take over from extensive growth, which would mean halting the decline in the profitability of capital, or else (in non-technical terms) improving the organisation of enterprises and the choice of investments, making progress by means of Western-style rationalisation.

The Plan for 1980 calls for a 24–28% rise in the national income above the 1975 level, compared to the previous Five-Year Plan with a target of 38% and an achievement of 28%. For industrial production the corresponding percentages are 35–39, 47 and 43; for production of industrial consumer goods 30–32, 48.6 and 37; for agricultural production 14–17, 23 and 13; for the value of retail sales 27–29, 41.8 and 35. The Plan for 1975–80 is less ambitious than for 1970–75, not only its targets lower than the targets of the previous Plan but also its achievements. Even this more modest Plan was to run into obstacles because it (once again) presupposed an increase in the productivity of the combined capital-labour factors.

Dubbed "the quality plan" (quality of products and quality of the organisation and technique of production), it nevertheless depends yet again on the accumulation of capital in industry (40% between 1976 and 1980 as against 47% in 1973–75): the forecast annual growth of the industrial work force comes down to 1% as against 1.3% in 1970–75. Similarly, the forecast growth for agriculture amounts to only 14–17% compared with the 23% forecast (and 13% achieved) in the previous Plan. The catastrophic harvests of 1972 and especially of 1975 (a shortfall of 90 million tons of cereals) are reminder enough that the Five-Year Plans have still less control over Soviet weather than over Soviet enterprises.

ARE WE TO CONCLUDE FROM THIS that the Soviet economy has arrived at *zero growth* (not out of respect for the arguments of the Club of Rome but out of inability either to hold the same direction or to change it)? Are economists blinding themselves by adopting the official statistics, only to juggle them later? Provided some figures are not taken literally—*e.g.*, the number of eggs, or pounds of meat consumed per person—and taking account of the different ways of calculating the national product in the East and the West, Western economists (and some Soviet economists too) come to the same provisional conclusions: the Soviet economy is not played out, but it more and more clearly reveals the structural defects which are crippling it.

Das Kapital, Russian-Style

WHY ARE THE Planners setting themselves more modest targets? Why are even these more modest targets not achieved? Why, when it produces more coal, more hydrocarbons, and more steel than the United States, does the Soviet Union restrict consumers to the bare minimum? Why does the Soviet leadership not proceed with the reforms that Moscow economists are advocating between the lines even in the official texts?

To all but the last of these questions it seems to me that there is an easy answer, observers being so unanimous, and up to this point I have formulated it in economic language.

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The priority systematically granted by Soviet planners to so-called heavy industry (energy, machinery)—coupled with a considerable military budget—involves the subordination of private consumption to capital accumulation. This has been the case ever since 1930, since the first Five-Year Plan. The consequences of these fundamental decisions were aggravated by the style of management. The ruination of agriculture through Collectivisation gave rise to a famine which neither socialist accumulation nor the military budget necessitated. In the same way the near-nominal wage paid for work invested in the collective made it inevitable for the *kolkhozniks* to conduct a "go-slow" and to put their best efforts into their private plots. Following Stalin's death, under Khrushchev and under Brezhnev, the deliveries of the *sovkhozes* and *kolkhozes* were paid for in cash; and wages were raised. But 25 to 30% of the value of agricultural production still comes from the peasants' tiny plots of land (and from those of blue-and white-collar workers on the outskirts of towns).

The socialist accumulation of capital thus came about at the expense of the incomes of the peasantry. The turnover tax made it possible to sell dear to the town-dweller what had been bought cheap in the country.

CONSIDER THE WORKING TIME necessary for the inhabitants of Washington, Moscow, Munich, London and Paris to buy the various goods which make up the household shopping basket. It takes 17.2 hours a week in Washington, 22.4 in Munich, 25.7 in Paris, 28.2 in London, and 78.8 in Moscow. Even allowing for the low cost of accommodation in Moscow, the gap remains; and it conveys what the economists' calculations show about the inequality of living standards. (Bear in mind that Moscow enjoys substantial advantages over the rest of the Soviet Union.)

Why is there speculation today about the immediate growth of the Soviet Union? Because the absurdity of the old régime is waxing, and the resources necessary for the Planners are waning. Why go on pursuing the kind of growth which means piling up more factories and more constant capital, and mobilising more workers, when the manpower reserves are dwindling and the return on capital lessening? The Soviet planners and their economic advisers keep harping on the same theme. We have got to replace *extensive* by *intensive* growth, we have got to move on "from quantity to quality." Well, certainly. But how is this alteration to come about so long as investment is confused with growth—so long as the régime will not abandon the authoritarian centralisation of management, restore freedom to the peasants and initiative to the heads of enterprises—so long as the incentive to work is absent?

THE SOVIET UNION enjoys a considerable amount of aid from the West (its absence would have been sorely felt in 1972 and 1975). The missing cereals are provided by the Americans. European capitalists quarrel among themselves for the honour of building the factories which are to turn out lorries, cars, cement or aluminium for the motherland of socialism. In spite of the high quality of its scientists and engineers, the Soviet Union finds itself irretrievably bested in the technological progress race (except, probably, where armaments are concerned).

Western aid does not and cannot suffice. In economic growth the greater share, other than the items of capital and labour, is represented by what it has become customary to call "the residual factor", in other words *better organisation*, *i.e.* better combination of the factors of production. Now what the Soviet system and régime eliminate or reduce to a minimum is precisely the residual factor, the quality of organisation and labour. Overmanning symbolises the failure of a system and of a régime.

I would subsume these factors under the following headings: (*1*) insufficient business autonomy; (*2*) authoritarian planning from the top, which in the last analysis controls only part of the economy but sows confusion throughout; (*3*) freak prices which do not allow reasoned allocation of resources and which encourage the planners to persist in their errors and in particular in over-investment; (*4*) the wastage and underemployment of constant capital, errors which give rise to the "idleness" of the workers; (*5*) the low productivity of capital; and (*6*) the technico-economic inefficiency of this Super-power—an inefficiency which could become a standing joke if ever it becomes known all over the world.

Russia & its Satellites

IN EASTERN EUROPE the Soviet standard of living occupies the bottom rung of the ladder. It is far behind the East German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, and even Hungary. I have in front of me a study by the *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung* (No. 108, 1975). With the DDR equal to 100, the figure for individual consumption stands at 81 for Czechoslovakia; 69 for Hungary; 65 for Poland; 56 for Bulgaria; 50 for the USSR; 44 for Romania. For monthly wages the corresponding figures are 83, 65, 62, 61, 51, 64; for meat consumption 104, 85, 96, 70, 70 and 70; for TV sets 108, 83, 74, 74, 73,

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38; for private cars 98, 56, 37, 56, 20 and 18. Do not let it be said that the socialist states reject the private car, which is only a desire artificially created by manipulative media in thrall to money! In the DDR, 21.4 out of every 100 households own a car; in Czechoslovakia 20.9; in Hungary 11.9; in Bulgaria 11.8; in Poland 8.0; and in the USSR 4.2.

The most casual visitor to Eastern Europe knows that the social climate is subtly different in Hungary or Poland from what it is in Russia. In Warsaw I had the feeling that I was still in the West, in a country whose culture is different but closely related. In Moscow I found myself elsewhere. It has always seemed obvious to me, although often unrecognised, that the Soviet Union alone provides the "ideal-typical" model of the purposely totalitarian régime with single party and centralised authoritarian planning. It was only in the Stalin period that the Marxist-Leninist parties of Eastern Europe each made their own special effort to turn themselves into small-scale Soviet Unions. The difficulty lies not in listing the various causes of the differences, but in giving each of these its true weight.

NONE OF THE COUNTRIES of Eastern Europe made voluntary choices of their fate, none chose their political or economic régime. Except in the Soviet Union, this did not emerge from a national roughly popular revolution but was imposed from the top by the Red Army and by Communist émigrés returning home in its wake. In Czechoslovakia, a country which felt itself betrayed by the West, the masses played something of a semi-spontaneous part in the coup of 1948; it took Russian tanks to restore Soviet order in Prague in 1968. The régime of the DDR, economically the most efficient in Eastern Europe, created by the victorious Russians, nevertheless encloses the East Germans behind a Great Wall which also divides the streets of the old capital of the *Reich*.

Since "de-Stalinisation" the leaderships in Eastern Europe have little by little acquired a certain legitimacy, both by improving economic performances and by playing a double game between the Soviet leadership and their own peoples. The Hungarians do not look on Janos Kadar as another Rakosi; but they fear his successor. Even Gierek, whose power is underwritten by Soviet tanks, is seeking national legitimacy by responding to the traditional aspirations of the Polish nation. Neither in Hungary nor in Poland could there be serious talk of "totalitarianism", taking the word as denoting a kind of monopoly accorded to an ideology. The economists do not teach Marxism-Leninism, nor do the sociologists try to substitute surreality for reality. They observe; they analyse. They explain the new social differentiation in the so-called socialist states, taking care all the while not to overstep certain fixed verbal limits.

THE DEGREE OF politico-ideological liberalisation varies from one country to another, as does the extent of economic reform—decentralisation; business autonomy; rationalisation of the price system. Economic efficiency seems to depend less upon political liberalisation than on managerial reforms. It might be objected that Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany had a head-start (undeniable for Czechoslovakia, but not for the other two countries). On the other hand, *all* the countries of Eastern Europe enjoy manifold advantages over the Soviet Union. None of them went into the collectivisation of agriculture by such cruel and ruinous methods. Only the Soviet Union physically eliminated the *kulaks* and so, inevitably, many of the most active and most educated peasants. It alone spent thirty years imposing low-paid work for the collective. Only the Marxist-Leninists of Moscow have waged virtual civil war against the peasants, and to this day still saddle the *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* with an administrative staff which represents the Enemy State more than it expresses the aspirations of countryside workers.

In the second place, the planning of a small country does not involve the same difficulties as that of a vast multi-national Empire. The overall figures valid for the Soviet Union as a whole are not fully comparable with those of Hungary or Czechoslovakia. If the rulers of the Empire have been seeking to prevent too great a disparity of development between the Republics, this may help explain performances inferior to those of homogeneous European states.

Nor is this all; and this seems to me the major cause of the USSR falling behind its comrade states. The Soviet Planners have locked themselves into a sort of vicious circle. For half a century they have known only one method of growth: more and more permanent productive capital, still more workers. They are not unaware that the profitability of their investments is falling, and that the need is to increase the "residual factor" and to improve the profitability of their enterprises. Probably they even know that the solution lies along the road indicated by the reforms associated with the name of their own Professor Liebermann—decentralisation; increased autonomy for enterprises; reinforcing the role of the monetary indicators. Now the reforms attempted in the 1960s have been lost in the shifting sands of the bureaucracy. For the period 1975–80 the Planners lay more stress than for the previous five years on the priority of capital accumulation. The distributed buying power will

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progress faster than the goods offered at their imposed prices. The lamentable confusion of distribution will persist, and so will the sorry shopping queues.

WHAT LESSONS ARE TO BE DRAWN from the contrast between the Soviet Union and the People's Democracies? Is it the Russian tradition —ideological obstinacy and the will for Empire— that bears the responsibility for Sovietism, that caricature of socialism? Let me once again point out the uncertainties of the historic charge.

The People's Democracies definitely enjoy a threefold advantage over the Soviet Union: (*1*) by their size, they facilitate the planners' task; (*2*) it is the Soviet Union that foots the main bill for super-militarisation or the maintenance of international order; (*3*) the leaders (those "slave-princes"), do not shut themselves off from the lessons of experience, and they innovate more readily, precisely because orthodoxy has been imposed on them from outside.

"Sovietism", therefore, definitely contains within itself certain elements some of which hark back to the heritage of Stalinism, others to the specificities of Lenin's and Trotsky's Bolshevik movement. In all the socialisms of the European East we find the same minority of Party dignitaries or the social élite—a minority which tends to separate itself from the mass and to reserve certain caste privileges for itself, in addition to the advantages secured for all the ruling minorities by their higher incomes. But in none of the People's Democracies, as far as can be judged, is the sense of socio-bureaucratic hierarchy taken to such an extreme. Anybody who has the slightest acquaintance with Soviet Russians (for example at international conferences) cannot fail to have been struck by the persistence of hierarchic differentiation. Everybody gets a reception geared according to the rank they hold in the official Moscow view. This obsession with rank—both one's own and others'—fades out as soon as you leave the Soviet Union. Crude and approximate as these notions may be, they suggest a major truth. Poland and Hungary were, and still are, part of European culture. Not till the early 18th century, and then only by a personal decision of its sovereign, did Russia enter the family of European states. On the eve of the 1914–18 War, the greater part of the social and intellectual élite (to which the Bolsheviks did not belong) were seeking inspiration in Europe for the Western reforms required by the Tsarist empire. The victory of Lenin—although he was outwardly a "Westerniser"—meant a withdrawal of Holy Russia into itself. The new masters borrowed the technology of the West as best they could. But they rejected as "bourgeois" or "capitalist" the virtues of European civilisation—freedom of persons and ideas, the continual re-examination of theories and practices—which are responsible at one and the same time for the instability and the richness of that civilisation.

The aberration from which Marxism-Leninism was hatched—the simultaneous rejection both of private ownership and of market mechanisms, together with the illusion of "eliminating poverty and inequality"—represents the extreme caricatural form of Western self-examination. Europe has always had its true believers. It has them still today. A few older German thinkers, in deadly earnest, paved the way for Bolshevik fanaticism. A few younger Parisian intellectuals, in levity or in ignorance, have continued for the past 25 years to tend the guttering flame. Seen within the intellectual totality of Europe and of the West, the Marxism-Leninism of strict observance, despite a few spectacular individual converts, does not surpass the scale or the substance of a sect; and one which is more bizarre than impressive. The electoral successes of the Italian Communist Party (and the process already under way in some towns and provinces) are reminders of the danger: though I doubt that the Italian people, or even the Party leadership, can lay claim to so blind a faith or so unflinching a loyalty to that system of thought and action as can the Marxist-Leninists of Moscow.

HAVING SAID ALL THAT, and having tried to make the most generous allowance for the part played by specifically Russian factors, I find that there are no grounds at all for thinking that the leaderships of the Hungarian, Polish, or Czechoslovak Parties, once freed from the grasp of Soviet Russia, would convert to freedom of their own accord and renounce all, or important parts, of their power. As long as the Red Army tanks assure the permanence of their reign, they improve their brand-image in the eyes of the governed, acquiring a partial legitimacy through concessions to popular aspirations and tinkerings with ideological conformism. What would happen on the day they were left to their own devices? Anyone is free to imagine. What is beyond doubt is that none of the Marxist-Leninist parties of Eastern Europe would cling with the same tenacity to a model of growth which, in the long run, induces its own paralysis. In this sense—this limited sense—Sovietism is not identical with socialism, not even with the socialism sired by Marxism-Leninism. That does not mean that we may ignore the heritage bequeathed to us—through their exploits and their crimes—by Lenin and his ilk.

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Are There "Models" in Sweden, Germany, France?

"THE CONCEPT OF SOCIALISM", so the President of the French Republic has several times repeated, "has lost all precise meaning. . . ." He therefore replaces it by that of *collectivism*, this being more likely to arouse the feelings of fear and hostility. Whatever the intentions of this choice of vocabulary, I take the ambiguity of the term socialism to be undeniable.

The first ambiguity, as I have suggested over and over again, has to do with the non-distinction between *ownership* (public or private) and the *régime* (based on planning or market). Here a further ambiguity arises, which has to do with the plurality and diversity of the societies and régimes which claim kinship with socialism. Because of this, there is no *model* of society which can be called "social-democratic", any more than there is one which can be called "socialist." There does exist a model of Soviet growth whose main features I have outlined in the previous pages, a growth model historically inseparable from One-Party rule and the Marxist-Leninist ideology. There also exist countries, in Europe, which have been governed for a long time by Social Democrats and which continue to belong to both the world capitalist market and to the sphere of liberal civilisation. Lastly, there exist any number of Third-World countries which style themselves "socialist" and whose institutions display an extreme heterogeneity.

Of the two characteristics by which a national economy is defined—the modes of *ownership* and of *administration*—economic thinking has long given precedence to ownership because it has not truly understood the constraints of economic calculation, the complexity of the allocation of resources. Intellectual opinion, which is sometimes the prisoner of prejudices derived from a bygone climate of thought, often continues to give pride of place to the legal or substantive formulae of ownership.

If we address ourselves to the modes of *administration* we shall search in vain for a Social-Democratic economy. French opinion, both of the Left and of the Right, tends to allude to "the Swedish model." Now Sweden has provided what is probably the most perfect model of a financial system designed to redistribute the national income and of social legislation protecting the individual against every risk from cradle to grave. Some see this as an example of the tutelary despotism described with horror by Alexis de Tocqueville. Others take the opposite view which sees it as an effective, if as yet unfinished, liberal revolution. Neither side denies nor overlooks the fact that the Social-Democratic party which governed uninterruptedly for 44 years did not go ahead with any nationalisation of the means of production out of *doctrinal* principle, that its essential concern was with *technical efficiency*, that it respected the authority of the private manager, and kept open frontiers. To put it briefly, the Swedish price system remained closely linked to that of the world market. The tax system bore more upon individual incomes than on those of businesses. Further yet, Sweden's spearhead industries (those which are influential abroad, which create offshoots, and which bring in foreign currency) are more concentrated than in most other Western countries. In Marxist-Leninist terminology, Sweden's is a "monopolistic capitalism", since a dozen or so families control those firms which are of world importance.

FOR THE REST, the originality of Sweden arises from a *consensus* which critics consider *conformism*. Socialisation starts in school and proceeds without pause and without end. The concept of life or system of values—adaptation to the community, rejection of the tragic and the sacred, reasonable pragmatism, sexuality reduced to a biological function to be divested of its mystery and charm, in other words comfort, security, and world disenchantment—gradually infiltrates into the consciousness of all. The trade unionists and monopolists share the same concern with efficiency; both are organised into confederations run by a few. The progressive transfer to the Trade Unions of ownership of businesses, which appeared in Olof Palme's programme, has been momentarily averted by the defeat of the Social-Democratic party in the elections of 1976. Various modes of "participation", for instance the presence of trade unionists in administrative councils, have become customary without incurring protest or conflict, so spontaneously do the representatives of the various classes (or class organisations) think within the same categories.

New Left critics are quite entitled to find fault with the continued trust in "market mechanisms" shown by the Swedish Social Democrats and to deplore the persistence of a class structure (features which define the so-called consumer societies).

> Cardiac illnesses, more widespread among the members of the ruling classes, are the sign of a society which generates constant tensions. Is it any consolation for a man threatened by a heart attack to tell himself that his widow will have a mink coat? Evidently, *to destroy class society* it is necessary to destroy *the consumer society which is at the same time a society of waste, frustration, tension and inflation.**

But why is a society without tension and without conflict taken to represent a human ideal? One

* Gabriel Ardant, *La révolution suédoise* (Paris, 1976).

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must also ask: does the elimination of the socially recognised hierarchy of values among various kinds of work—and the reduction of all objects to a strictly pragmatic function, devoid of all symbolism—accord with the natural order of societies or even with a desirable order?

On the other tack, Roland Huntford anathematises that society as "totalitarianism" without violence and without torture:

> The Swedes have demonstrated the power of that form of semantic manipulation Orwell called Newspeak: the changing of words to mean something else . . . "freedom" does not yet in Swedish, as in the brainchild of Orwell's Ministry of Truth, mean exactly "slavery", but it already implies "submission". . . . The ultimate crime in *Brave New World* is to deviate from a norm. That norm is innocent of ethics and morality, and decided on grounds of expediency alone. The situation is already a doctrine of Swedish law. Gone is the idea of right or wrong, or the moral content of an action. Crime is now defined as social deviation. . . . Sweden, like Soviet Russia, belongs to that group of countries in which "individuality" has a derogatory ring.*

I do not know Sweden by direct experience, and I leave it to the reader to choose between the French leftist who records and deplores the half-way stoppage of the movement towards levelling (to the highest level, of course) and the English conservative who presents Sweden as a relic of the Middle Ages, extraordinarily backward except in the technological field. Certain features of the Swedish mentality (for example the "abolition of history") recur as general Western trends elsewhere. In any case the similarities between the *despotisme tutélaire*, described by Tocqueville, and the Swedish reality described even by well-disposed observers do compel the comparison, if with some reservations.

FOR ALL THAT, present-day French society could absorb another extra dose of social democracy without plunging into tutelary despotism. Let me leave open the debate between the respective merits of a society which aims at individual security by way of general comformity, and a society which still takes ideas seriously and expresses itself through conflicts. What the Swedish pseudo-model should call to mind is that the "social democracy" which is considered to be most successful is also that which retains a predominant concern with productive efficiency and respects its two imperatives: the price mechanism and access to the world market. The "social democracy" of the Federal German Republic is likewise achieving the conversion from Marxism to the social market economy; it manifests the same intransigence in favour of the Market as the rulers of the DDR in favour of planning. But East Berlin, thanks to its relations with Bonn, benefits at least in part from the advantages of the régime it repudiates. Maurice Duverger accuses the Social Democrats of "bumbling into opportunism", probably because they reject on principle both the nationalisation of "the means of production" and the substitution of Planning for the Market. Social Democrats of Sweden and West Germany alike reject Marxism (although the former, at the instance of the younger generation, tend to drift closer to it, whereas the latter tend to move decidedly away).

THE TERM "Social Democracy", therefore, designates no definite model of economy or society. The distinction between social democracy and socialism has lost all precise significance to the same extent that one of the two terms has kept none at all. What sort of vague idea is being put forward when someone suggests (as did Mario Soares) that social democracy is not appropriate in a relatively under-developed country like Portugal?

My impression is that social democracy is being given the credit for the redistribution of the national product by fiscal means, the Welfare State, and generous social legislation. Now all these measures presuppose a national per-capita product on which to raise the sums necessary for social transfers without compromising investment. Perhaps the Portuguese Prime Minister is alluding to the divergence between a policy of distribution, characteristic of syndicalism, and the productivism required for "take-off" by poor countries? Perhaps he has in mind the more-or-less extensive activities of the modern State, and even the nationalisation of certain firms?

None of these characteristics is enough to highlight a clear and distinct contrast between two ideal types. Among the states of Western Europe, the France of the Fifth Republic—a pluralist democracy—remains economically speaking the least liberal, the most *dirigiste*, and the most bureaucratic. Every plan for stabilisation provides the opportunity (or the pretext) for a price freeze. Public ownership covers a greater fraction of industry and the public services than in the Western Germany of Brandt and Schmidt. The ruling circles display a flexibility as regards industrial policy—concentration of firms, development of the growth sectors—which is more determined (if not more effective) than in West Germany. The Swedish ruling powers, managers of capitalism for some 44 years, have never neglected efficiency of labour and organisation; more than that, the quasi-moral value they attached to "the adaptation of the individual to

* Roland Huntford, *The New Totalitarians* (Allen Lane, 1972), *Le Nouveau totalitarisme* (Paris, 1976).

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the requirements of the community" may represent a means for increasing productivity at the same time as it is taken to be a social end. France, on the other hand, combines a tradition of centralised quasi-authoritarian bureaucracy with a state of permanent rebellion on the part of its citizens against the state.

We are dealing here with a diversity of style and of culture, of the particular character which each of the nations of Europe impresses on relations between individuals, and between people and institutions. If you single out only the major characteristics of an economic régime in a developed Western European economy in the course of the last 30 years, you will strive in vain to establish a contrast between the countries dominated by Social Democracy and those seeking or finding socialism. All the countries of Western Europe are open to the outside world and subject to market mechanisms, more or less manipulated by the state or by the big employer or trade union oligopolies. All governments accept their responsibilities with respect to international relations; to the management of economic contingencies (the struggle against inflation or slump); to social legislation; and to the alleviation of damage done by accidental circumstances of any kind to the interest of a given group. The differences from one country to another depend more on the practical degree of success or failure than upon doctrine, and generally on the priority the government allocates to particular goals (the West Germans stress price stability, the French expansion).

It goes without saying that social and political differences, the distribution of incomes, fiscal practice, the party system, *still* exist, more or less strongly marked, in the Europe of the Nine (to which members of the old Free Trade zone who have stayed out of the Common Market also belong in many respects).

DOES THE TERM "*socialism*", applied to most of the states of the Third World and usually claimed by its spokesmen, designate any definite economic political or social régime? I think not. Just as most of the developing states like to call themselves *non-aligned*, they readily call themselves *socialist*. By non-alignment they express their wish not to take sides with either the Soviet or the Western bloc. But it is hard to see why the countries of Africa, Asia, or Latin America should take sides in this historic rivalry, unless threatened from within or without by the United States or the Soviet Union. The professions of socialist faith are like the declarations of non-alignment: they express (or are intended to express) the twofold rejection of liberal capitalism's democratic pluralism, on the one hand, and of Sovietism on the other.

Varieties of Socialism

IN ACTUAL FACT the self-styled socialist régimes of the Third World belong to neither of the two types which continue in spite of everything to oppose and vie with each other in Europe. Only the states ruled by Marxist-Leninist parties —North Korea, Viet Nam, Cambodia, probably Laos, and Cuba—practise what has to be termed Sovietism.

All these states display various common features derived from the USSR model: militarised work-discipline prevails in the sugar-cane fields of Cuba just as it does in the factories of North Korea. The ubiquity of ideology and of police control recurs whatever the climate—among peoples previously known for their easy-going way of life just as much as in those (like the North Vietnamese) who all down the centuries have given evidence of battle prowess and fierce resistance to external pressure. There is no doubt that the countries conquered by the Marxist-Leninists, or converted to the faith of these new believers, will gradually develop according to their own nature. The differentiation noticeable in Eastern Europe will also make itself felt in the other continents. The fact remains that at least the first phase of a Marxist-Leninist régime always seems to involve various similar, if not identical, phenomena.* The single Party, armed with an ideology, utterly rules out any other way of thinking and any other representation of the world; the Party becomes the custodian of truth; re-education or concentration camps absorb a greater or lesser number of the old upper class, assorted deviationists, and real or alleged counter-revolutionaries; the planners draw on the Soviet model for their target of accelerated growth and often in granting priority to "heavy industry."

Yet after the break with Moscow in the early 1960s China popularised *a different model of economic growth* based on the *same* model of politico-ideological régime. So it may be that the export of economic Sovietism no longer entails the same priorities, or at least that it no longer applies these priorities with the same rigour as in the USSR.

In some African countries Sovietism lends the model a language rather than a practice. Guinea possessed none of the human or material means necessary to economic Sovietism. In the same way, it is hard to see Angola building an economy or even a state comparable to those of Viet Nam or

* The little-known case of Cambodia seems exceptional by reason of its absolute violence and the determination to rebuild a different society from a starting-point of total destruction.

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Korea—unless the institutions of Soviet Angola are built, if not by the Russians (which would probably produce "rejection" phenomena), then at least by the Cubans, who have a better chance of making themselves accepted by the people and rulers of the former Lusitanian province.

The non-Marxist-Leninist socialism of the Third World is not bound by any doctrine, and does not display any of the features forecast for the post-Capitalist régime by the 19th- and 20th-century prophets: no Tocquevillesque tutelary despotism; no Huxleyan brave new world; no Trotskyite reign of abundance; no egalitarian liberal community. Politically, the socialisms of the Third World reject institutional pluralism, less out of principle than necessity. With a very few exceptions, none has managed to sustain a régime based on competition between parties. Even today, France is not making such an effortless success of it for us to be able to look down and take a high tone in passing judgment on what some see as a failure, others as a rejection.

Just about everywhere in Africa, Latin America and Asia, a party made up either of civilians or soldiers, based either on a privileged group or on a rising class, holds a more or less complete monopoly over the state and its benefits. The transfer of power from one group to another is more often produced by a *coup d'état* than by elections. The masters of the state nearly always set out to be "modernisers"; in this sense they take their inspiration from one of the ruling Bolshevik ideas. On the other hand they do not invoke an all-embracing ideology, and the future they reveal to faithful eyes—national greatness or higher living-standards—does not affect the whole of humanity and promises no transfiguration of historic destiny.

In the same way, the economies of those socialist states do not tend either towards Soviet-style overall planning or towards the modern liberalism of Western Europe. They directly control one sector of industry, operate a "voluntarist" development policy, in differing degrees protect their domestic market in the interest of new-born industries. According to the land and the moment, they will encourage more (or less) foreign investment, restrict (or enlarge) the territory open to private enterprise, refuse (or accept) integration with the world economy. South Korea stands at the extreme of liberalism, Algeria stands at the other extreme. But does the Egypt of President Sadat deserve the description of "socialist" more than the Korea of General Park? One is doing rather better than the other, but in quite different and more favourable conditions. To put it briefly: there exists no one model typical of the Third World, only a lot of compromises between the various strategies of development and diverse methods of management.

Apart from a few Marxist-Leninist countries—and a few countries which have preserved relatively stable régimes close to the Western democracies, with a relatively liberal economy (Venezuela, say)—the political régimes of the Third World are basically oligarchic and authoritarian, and the economic régimes usually lean towards *dirigisme* without rejecting the market mechanisms.

There is no question of pronouncing, in these few words on the respective merits of the various versions of African, Arab, or Latin American socialisms. I confine myself to this one remark: only the Marxist-Leninist régimes take indoctrination to the point of eliminating all ideological dissent. The amount of intellectual and moral liberalism tolerated by the authoritarian or (in a vague sense) socialist régimes varies widely. Throughout the world, the distinction between democracy and liberalism, current in Europe (and only half-erased by the special American sense of the word liberalism), is regaining its forgotten scope.

WHY THEN, FINALLY, is *socialism* returning to fashion in France, as against Social Democracy? The answer seems obvious: the *Programme Commun*. In Western Europe all the Social Democratic parties, with the possible exception of the Labour Party, have given up the idea of Nationalisation on principle. They have all realised that the prosperity of the last 25 years has a good deal to do with open frontiers, and that these are inseparable from the price mechanism. The Socialist Party reconstituted by François Mitterand was compelled by the hard facts of electoral arithmetic to ally itself with the Communist Party. It had to consecrate that alliance by a programme of government, and it committed itself to nationalising nine industrial groups and all banking and insurance.

THIS IS OBVIOUS NONSENSE. **In order to point the means of production in the desired direction the government has no need at all to nationalise the banks and insurance companies in the private sector. The news that every Frenchman's money is now to be totally dependent on public organisations cannot fail to touch off a panic even before the first measures come into force. The threat of nationalisation which will hover over every business from then on will discourage all investment. French socialism—somewhere between Sovietism and the Mixed Economy run by the Social Democrats—will never exist except on paper. How long will it take the Socialists to understand the lesson of the SPD in West Germany? How long will it take to plunge the economy into chaos? How long will it take France to emerge from it?**

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4. *The Future Between East & West*

REDUCED IN SIZE, part of a small promontory headland of Asia, labelled "capitalist" by the Russians and "imperialist" by the Third World, Western Europe nevertheless showed every sign of historic achievement, of spectacular recovery after unprecedented disaster. Nations which had so often massacred each other were reconciled and frontiers were, so to speak, erased. Empires, out of tune with the spirit of the times and now too expensive, had been given up with greater or less grace; the alarming challenge of Soviet growth, imaginary rather than real, had been met by an insolent prosperity; and the free world

market had become integrated (thanks to a 12% annual increase in the volume of trade). The Europeans who were living on the western periphery of the Eurasian land mass, from the North Cape to Sicily, from Istanbul to Stockholm, had apparently embarked together on a new adventure—that of freedom for all, not only for themselves; of increased wealth less inequitably distributed at first within countries, and then, gradually, between countries.

Now, as I write, crisis casts its threatening shadow over the still recent past. The miraculous quarter-century of triumphant popularised Keynesian theory now looks no better than the prodrome of the "stagflation" in which Western economies are floundering. The fragile unity both among the industrialised economies and between them and the Third World conglomeration is disintegrating. I shall be devoting the next part of this study to this polymorphous crisis, the significance of which is still unclear to those who are experiencing it. Does it prove the abiding vitality of a civilisation progressing through self-examination? Or does it prove that old societies, fearful of the future and with a falling birthrate, are played out?

Before sinking into pessimism, let us go back a few years. Which of the two Europes—or rather was it Europe or the Soviet *imperium*—won the Cold War (to the extent that such a war can be won)? Which camp was the more creative and inventive in industry, in culture, or in the art of improving human relations? Had not so large a proportion of the European intelligentsia, especially in France, insisted for so long on shutting their eyes and blocking their ears—some out of masochism, others out of ignorance or mere thoughtlessness—no one would find it necessary to enter a plea for free Europe. But Europeans live in the shadow of the last expansionist military empire on our continent, and it was an empire which, if Solzhenitsyn anathemised it, someone like Jean-Paul Sartre treated with endless indulgence.

I have looked for Europe's superiority in a field in which most people refuse to see it—the economic, in fact in that of productivity and efficiency. Not that I think, of course, that the index of productivity of capital or labour indicates the essential quality of a society or civilisation. Yet Western superiority, in so far as human liberties and *joie de vivre* are concerned, can only be doubted by those whose minds are imprisoned by fanaticism or prejudice. Societies which call themselves socialist say that they are the standard-bearers of a socio-economic order worthy to succeed the mixed régimes of the West and destined to take over from them.

Convergence & Divergence

THE OLD CONVERGENCE THEORY—against which the doctrinaires of the Soviet system and those of the Mixed Economy (or capitalism, if you prefer the term) were protesting with similar vehemence even before the outbreak of the crisis—is out of fashion. Only as a result of a curious misreading of history could it be imagined that the régimes which we call democratic, based on inter-party political competition, legal status for the Opposition, and continuous safeguarding of the rights of the minority, represented either the essential be-all and end-all or even the normal type of government. On the contrary—because they represent a rare, precious and exceptional achievement in the art of politics, they deserve to be preserved by men's determination, if necessary against the general trend of development, even against "irresistible" historical forces.

Of course, if it was naive to expect democratisation in the Soviet Union to advance at the same speed as the index of production or consumption, it was no less so to present as alternatives "Stalinism or Westminster . . . the Kremlin or the White House. . . ." There are more things under the sun than our own philosophy. One imagines that the Soviet oligarchs may well become more sensitive to popular demand. Apart from the paroxysmal periods of ideologised tyranny, in no modern society have the oligarchs been able to insulate themselves from the bureaucracy and the people. The Brezhnev *équipe* is trying in its way to satisfy Soviet consumers, in the first place because (in contrast to Stalin) it would rather give the people it governs what they want; secondly, because in the long run "consumer satisfaction" conditions the enthusiasm for productive work; finally because Marxism-Leninism has never adopted the Spartan interpretation of socialism.

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Europe, with its Western standard of living (including its family motor-cars and its kitchen gadgets) inevitably looms large to the other Europe in the East, only semi-accepting or semi-resigned to the colonial fate imposed upon it by the Soviet *imperium*. That régime can neither raise the Iron Curtain nor itself evolve towards democracy solely under the impulsion of improved living conditions—for the maintenance of the USSR's politico-military domination demands that the neighbouring régimes do not diverge too far from the Moscow model. The Kremlin has had to resort to the bayonet twice in the last 30 years to remind first the Hungarians and then the Czechs that there are limits to the deviation that can be tolerated.

THE NOTIONS ON THIS THEME put out by one of Dr Henry Kissinger's White House staff (and immediately christened the "Sonnenfeld doctrine" by the press) did not merit all the criticism they received; nevertheless, even putting the most favourable interpretation on them, they were open to the accusation of naivety or inconsistency. What the US State Department was saying was approximately this. Soviet Russia's domination of Eastern Europe remains crudely military. We, the Americans, cannot "liberate" the East Europeans, driving back the Russian armies. Accordingly we are prepared to recognise the Great-Power interests which justify a Russian presence or predominance in the zone of the *glacis*. We can perhaps forget the unfortunate phrase about the "organic nature" of the Russian presence. The American diplomat clearly wanted the East Europeans to recover at least part of their freedoms without impairing the interests of their Great Power neighbour. In fact they have already recaptured a part. The naivety and the inconsistency, however, lie in the failure to recognise the indissoluble link between Great-Power interests and preservation of a minimum of institutional and ideological conformity.

The *glacis* provides the USSR with protection only to the extent that it includes régimes allied to the Kremlin. If it does not, it becomes a threat, not a shield. In the event of military conflict between Europe and the Soviet *imperium* the exact type of government in Hungary or Czechoslovakia would hardly matter. In any case loyalty to the alliance would count for more than verbal adherence to the doctrines of dialectical materialism. But, militarily, the men in the Kremlin know perfectly well that they have no reason to fear invasion from the West in the foreseeable future; it is the heartland of old Europe which has reason to fear the flood of thousands of tanks emerging, year after year, from Soviet armaments factories. Yet by its ideas, and even more by its way of life, Europe calls in question both the basis and the practice of Sovietism.

To revert to the proposition that I have already formulated: from the means of production there come only two types of end-purpose goods, two types of final product—arms and civil consumption. People do not consume a machine or fertilisers or tractors; they do consume bread, meat, cars, and refrigerators. Every year 30% of the national product goes on investment, at least 10% (between 10% and 15%) on defence, between 5% and 10% on public expenditure; there remains some 50% for private consumption. The Soviet régime is vulnerable because of the absurdity of its ideology (rule-by-the-Party=democracy) and the irrationality of its economy (accumulation-of the-means-of-production=progress). Kremlin policy stems from this vulnerability—peaceful coexistence between countries, mortal combat between ideologies. Put in our language: the Soviets wish to maintain the cohesion of the community of socialist countries and bring about the disintegration of the "aggressive" NATO bloc. They reject the West's ideas but are prepared to buy its technology. Like so many of the Third World governments they buy fractions of a system without grasping its spirit; they acquire a machine but not the human relationships which it predicates or implies.

Cui Bono?

THE MUCH-DISCUSSED QUESTION OF East-West trade must be considered in this context. At first sight—and this is usually the reaction of dissidents from the Soviet Union—the West is only demonstrating a death-wish, an urge to suicide, by providing its inveterate enemies with the means of removing the basis of the West's historic superiority, technology. To quote Lenin: they themselves will provide the rope with which we shall hang them. Conversely, some people regard East-West trade exchanges as an instrument of peace-making—if the capitalist market and the socialist market become mutually dependent, a decisive stage will have been reached on the road to reconciliation and reunification of the two halves of Europe.

I propose to dismiss straight away both these extreme views. Before 1914 the great economists proved that Great Britain and Hohenzollern Germany had everything to lose from *une guerre à mort* owing to their close reciprocal supplier-customer relationship. Economic rivalry between the United States and the United Kingdom has not prevented them working closely together, any more than Franco-German commercial exchanges have prevented wars of monstrous

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proportions. Moreover, in the present-day world, imposition of a Quarantine or an Economic Blockade has seldom produced the results intended. Tito's Yugoslavia withstood a blockade by the Stalinist countries because the other Superpower came to its assistance. Castro's Cuba has survived the American blockade because it has not been enforced by all Western countries and the Soviet Union has provided the necessary aid. Even after Fidel Castro had adopted "Sovietism" there was still a chance that it would be a more-or-less autonomous Sovietism *vis-à-vis* Moscow. Blockade has in fact reinforced the alliance between the USSR and a small Caribbean state, and may well have turned it into something irreversible.

TAKING A WORLDWIDE VIEW of the two zones, the capitalist world market and the socialist world market (to use Marxist-Leninist terminology), no one can imagine that the initiative for a rupture of relations would come from the former. The capitalist world market includes one predominant entity, but it is not an imperial power. The West European countries would not submit themselves to an embargo on the USSR and its bloc, decreed by the United States. They do not criticise the restrictions sometimes imposed by the rulers in Washington on the export of US plant and machinery; instead they rub their hands in so far as they profit thereby and increase their share of East-West trade. During the Cold War this trade had been reduced to a minimum because the Soviet Union wished to reorientate the trade of the satellites and integrate them into a controllable COMECON system. On their side the United States drew up a list of military items, sale of which would be forbidden. According to a number of expert American studies this selective embargo ultimately proved nugatory or "counter-productive." The Soviets filled the gaps from their own industry; in meeting the challenge of the embargo they even made certain technical advances.*

Apart from certain instances of high-grade technology (*i.e.* the latest type of computer), a selective embargo becomes increasingly meaningless the more one looks for some rational basis to it. What the Russians, according to comparative cost theory, are most interested in buying from the United States or abroad generally is cereals (production in the Soviet Union being expensive in terms of both capital input and labour). But for various reasons, if only as a result of pressure from the farmers, the United States will not refuse to sell cereals unless there is a world-wide shortage and unless sales to the Soviet Union would reduce the resources required for underdeveloped countries.

THE OBJECTION WILL RIGHTLY be made that, in contrast to the purchase of wheat or maize, the purchase of equipment enables the Soviets to improve the productivity of their factories and compete with the Western powers on better terms. In certain branches of Soviet industry the proportion of equipment of Western origin reaches a high percentage. A third of the sugar-beet harvest is treated in factories bought in the West, and a third of the beer comes from breweries built by Western firms. Industrial equipment of foreign origin is said to represent overall 15% of the total in the USSR.

It is a striking fact that during the 1950s the Soviets bought only 130 licences in the West while the Japanese bought 2,500.** Here again the character of the régime explains the preference for the purchase of complete factories, front-gate keys and locks and all, to the acquisition of a licence. In many fields the Soviets could copy foreign models. But they have difficulty in overcoming the weaknesses created by their type of management, in ensuring coordination between different factories or several branches of industry. The priority objective of a factory is to reach certain output figures; introduction of a new procedure, or an improved machine, does not necessarily promote fulfilment of the Plan, at least in the initial phase.

By giving a Western firm overall responsibility for the construction of a unit of production—capital, engineers, sometimes even the labour force—the Soviets reduce or eliminate the bottlenecks, the difficulty of inserting into their system new machines and different methods of organisation originating outside it. This does not mean, however, that they are "catching up" with the West: the equipment sold is not necessarily the last word in technology and, unless replaced and kept up-to-date, it will rapidly become obsolete.

Peace & Reunification

NEVERTHELESS, ALL THESE ARGUMENTS do leave a degree of uncertainty. It is understandable that Western salesmen should not be happy to give up deals with the Soviets, particularly when business activity is slowing down. According to the *Financial Times* (29 July 1976),

* See *Soviet Economic Prospects for the Seventies, A Compendium of Papers Submitted to the Joint Economic Committee* (Congress of the United States, June 1973), pp. 638–689. In reply to the embargo on natural rubber and industrial diamonds the Soviets built up a synthetic rubber industry and went on to discover vast diamond fields in eastern Siberia.

** *The Economist*, 17 April 1976, pp. 50–51.

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during the period 1972–1975 West Germany will have built up a surplus of 22 milliard D-marks in its trade with Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe absorbs a high proportion of West German capital exports and provides Bonn with the greater part of the overall trade surplus. From the economic point of view this may be called reciprocal dependence—one side wants orders, the other equipment. It is to everyone's advantage. From the political point of view these mutual advantages do not balance out quite so well—for the West is selling some of the secrets of its continuing superiority. But self-discipline in trade is alien to the Western countries and since a number of these secrets still cannot be sold it is better to put up with what cannot be stopped, and to turn one's attention to the long-term consequences.

Since, in the 1975–1980 Plan, the Soviet Union envisages an increase of trade with the West of the order of 20–25% per year—which presupposes increased resources to finance imports—the final decisive question must be asked: does increasing Soviet dependence on Western technology, balanced by increasing Western dependence on East European markets—in short, reciprocal dependence between the two Europes—constitute a stage on the road to reunification and so to genuine European peace?

In the light of present-day information the reply to this question must be negative. It is true that the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc are feeling the effects of the capitalist market's inflation. They are clearly feeling the impact of the higher prices of goods they have to import. The Soviet Union still benefits from the price of petroleum while the countries of Eastern Europe, who are its importers, suffer from it. In the light of this, so-called socialist Europe probably has a vested interest in the survival and rehabilitation of Western capitalism. Neither the Poles nor the Hungarians make any secret of the fact; but they only belong to the Soviet bloc out of constraint, not from choice.

If the socialist economies continue to increase their purchases in the West, if they are forced to export manufactured products (and not solely raw materials to their creditors in order to repay their debts), one can visualise on the horizon an increasing symmetry of dependence between the two world markets. In this sense—and in the long term—commercial exchanges would contribute to bringing the two worlds closer to each other. In the short and medium term things are quite different. The Soviet Union increases its efforts and gets into debt in order to make good the lag in technology and productivity which its own political régime constantly recreates.

BUT THE SOVIET RÉGIME **is certainly threatened—not so much by ideological rivalry as by the example of the West. The Russian frontiers remain relatively hermetically sealed, but not those of Poland or East Germany. As a result of the Helsinki agreement millions of Germans have visited the Eastern zones and sectors; in Poland both the workers and the intellectuals are resisting, angry over the low level of the people's standard of living and the persistence of Soviet domination. Even in its present crisis Western Europe still contrasts its colourful exterior to the East's drab bureaucracy, its liberal basis of freedom to state regimentation, the varied lives of men and women to the imperatives of a Plan.**

5. *The Rediscovery of a Fictitious Socialism*

EVERYBODY CALLS HIMSELF A SOCIALIST, **or so says Maurice Duverger in his recent** *Lettre aux socialistes*. **And I would be tempted at first sight to agree with him, since even Jean-François Revel (in his** *Tentation totalitaire*) **declares himself a socialist too. It seems that this word now stands for a régime consonant with the hopes of men of goodwill, with all the so-called modern values: welfare and justice, human rights, workaday purposefulness. But this same word also stands, in the economic order, for the progressive substitution of planning for the market, and of collective for private** ownership—in other words an institutional system and a régime about which there is nothing to prove that they guarantee, or even permit, the achievement of these selfsame values. The postulate of a fore ordained harmony between collective ownership and planning on the one hand and democratic aspirations on the other has no basis other than the Marxist Vulgate. I therefore see no reason for making my own profession of socialist faith and adding it to everybody else's.

What reasons does Maurice Duverger offer for doing so? Let me quote some typical examples:

> The cultural models peddled by the cash-dominated media impose habits, behaviours, ideas and ways of feeling and understanding in conformity with the fundamental aim of capitalism: consumption by the many for the profits of the few.

I don't see how more nonsense could easily be spoken in so few words. How could consumption by the many possibly restrict profit only to a few? If all consume, then they are at any rate enjoying a higher standard of living. Would they allocate

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their buying power any differently in the absence of media? The East Europeans, quite removed for decades from the baneful influence of the "cash-dominated media", appear to favour a model of consumption rather similar to that of their Western counterparts. The waiting lists of would-be car-owners are growing all the time in the Soviet Union. In any case, a few pages further on—and without worrying about the contradiction—Maurice Duverger reproaches our societies with the poverty of the workers.

> The majority of workers stays enclosed within a grey, hard life, well short of the potential of industrial society.

What potential? And of what industrial society? Anybody who can complain in turn about the excess and then the insufficiency of consumption in the West must either be failing to re-read his own words, or else have in mind some other notion of "consumption", one which has yet to be defined.

The New Dogmatics

"WHY SOCIALISM?" I must ask my Paris colleague who is so bent on instructing the socialists on the threshold of power in France:

> Only a socialist economy can be totally organised in a rational fashion—which assures it of a technical superiority over capitalism. It alone can guarantee that production will henceforth be governed by social utility and not by business profit.

What is meant here by "total organisation"? The expression does not convey a precise meaning, and for that reason it defies criticism. What it suggests, though, is some more or less attenuated form of overall planning.

Now there are two choices here—either Planning aims, in the Soviet manner, to replace the Market, the autonomous decisions of business enterprises, and in fact ends by fixing priorities in favour of certain sectors in the vain hope of controlling the whole of economic life from on high; or else Planning sees its sole task as that of keeping the general situation under control and maintaining a balance among the various products while conducting an active policy on behalf of such-and-such an industry, in which case the Mixed Economies of the West are indeed fufilling this overall task. As for the mutual antagonism between social utility and profit, this is surely kindergarten stuff. Who determines "social utility" if not the holders of power? And should not the Soviet experience have proved once and for all, even to Duverger, that the will of the planners does not coincide with that of ordinary mortals by some kind of divine dispensation of the State? There exists no scientific measure, by democratic process, of the common good. In the Soviet Union, "social utility" requires devoting to armaments what a Sakharov considers a monstrously high proportion of the national product. As for the profits of business enterprises—as distinct from speculative or accidental profits—they testify either to greater productive efficiency or to the approval of the consumer. Anybody is entitled to prefer the decisions of the Planners to the choice of the Consumers, or vice versa. In variable proportions, they both in fact influence the allocation of resources. But to ordain that socialism embodies the "rationality" of "global organisation", and is *ipso facto* superior to capitalism, is liable to produce either a smile or a howl, according to whether the hearer is feeling kindly or happens to remember the Gulag. Maurice Duverger believes himself to be a free spirit; he remains a prisoner of the Marxist Vulgate.

I have given two examples, and there are others. We read that socialism has done away with "the exploitation of man by man" in the Soviet Empire—which does not prevent Stalin appearing a few pages further on, between Adolf Hitler and General Pinochet, among those men in history who have come close to "absolute blackness." No exploitation of man by man just because private enterprise has disappeared? Doesn't the deduction of surplus value by the state bureaucrats deserve the name of exploitation, according to the concepts of Marxism which Duverger cites?

One notes at least the acknowledgment that the combination of socialism and of personal liberty has nowhere been achieved. Still, despite his sincere intention of writing a non-partisan book, Duverger unhesitatingly subscribes to two of the dogmas or postulates of the Marxist Vulgate which is still exercising its intellectual tyranny. *Dogma:* the contradiction between individual profits and social utility. *Dogma:* "Without reference to Marx, socialism remains spineless and ineffective. Through having forgotten it, the English Labourites and the German Social Democrats bumble their way into opportunism."

WHY SHOULD THE PROFITS of a business introducing new products on to the market at low prices be in conflict with social utility? There is no need to believe in the old "invisible hand" and the pre-established harmony of *all* individual interests with social utility before rejecting as absurd the essential contradiction between the two.

As for the "opportunism" into which the German Social Democrats are "bumbling" (if only the French socialists could some day bumble into its like!), this formula conveys with uncon-

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scious naivety the central, original, prejudice of the Marxist Vulgate: the dogma of a radical breach between the economic *management* of society and the *destruction* of Capitalism, the breach consisting sometimes of the expansion of public ownership, sometimes of the enlargement of State *dirigisme*.

Here, then, is our theme: everyone is a Socialist, no one nowadays comes out for Sovietism. How are the two propositions to be reconciled? In the light of the experiences of this century, what is the distinction between Sovietism, Social Democracy, and the socialism whose first stage is intended to be the *Programme Commun* of the French Left? Is there any such thing as the socialism professed by Mario Soares in Portugal and by François Mitterrand in France? Does it exist, can it ever exist?

Westernism & Sovietism

COMPARISONS OF GROWTH-RATES used to take pride of place in the ideological—or perhaps merely rhetorical—rivalry between the Soviet régime and Western-style societies. For some years such league-tables have almost disappeared. Westerners no longer give themselves nightmares by working out the *GNP* ratios in ten-twenty-thirty years' time. The Soviets, on the other hand, though with no great conviction, are again starting to praise the growth of the East European economies compared to the stagnation of those of Western Europe.

Several circumstances account for the change. During the 1960s a substantial fraction of what was seen as leftist thinking in the United States and France burned its old idols of the marketplace and turned against "productivism", the illusion that the Good Life or Equality would emerge of their own accord out of an increased national product. At the same time the direct evidence about real conditions in Eastern Europe was growing fast. Public opinion was now refusing to believe that Soviet resources could ever constitute a threat to the West. Finally, the revelation of the horrors of Sovietism—War, Communism, Collectivisation, the Great Purges, Gulag—afforded a certain degree of protection against the return of similar illusions. It is now common knowledge that the Western tributes of admiration and gratitude to the Tyrant were in full spate at the very moment when he was committing his worst crimes. Even the Western cult of Mao was a little muffled by embarrassed memories of the earlier "cult of personality."

All calculations of growth rates involve technical difficulties which I cannot go into. As regards the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, further difficulties arise: some of them due to the uncertainty of the statistics, others to the different definition of the national product (eliminating services and transport) and, above all, to the problem of prices. If growth is calculated on a *constant* price base, then if we choose the prices of the initial period when industrial products and (because of their scarcity) new products cost dear, the national product at the end of the period will be higher. Choosing the prices current at the *end* of the period gives a smaller national product and, therefore, a lower rate of growth. Only those specialist observers who combine a knowledge of Russian and of statistical techniques with a critical spirit and good common sense arrive at valid results, and even then not without a margin of guesswork.

In this deliberately summary study, the relevant facts appear to be as follows. The growth rates of the Soviet national product since the October 1918 Revolution exceed those of the Old Régime, at least if these are derived from the post-1860 period in its entirety. For the characteristic post-War period of 1950–72, the Soviet growth rate of 5.8% also exceeds that of the United States during the same period (3.7%). But it declines by 7% between 1950 and 1960 to 4.7% between 1960 and 1972. In any case the decline in the Soviet rate of growth reminds us that in order to be significant the comparison has to take account of more or less homologous phases—for instance, for the United States, the 19th-century phase of rapid industrialisation.

Since the last World War the USA has taken little part in the growth-rate race. The percentage of the national product directed into investment has been regularly lower than the percentages of the other Western countries (about 15%–17% as against 23%–25% for West Germany or for France). Last but not least, it is the *GNP* per-capita and the efficiency of the factors of production which determine the relative wealth of nations in the long term. And according to the World Bank, the current growth rate of the *GNP* per-capita of the USSR for the period 1960–73 comes to 3.6% compared with 3.7% for the German Federal Republic and 4.7% for France.

MORE SIGNIFICANT STILL, in my view, are the figures relating to the productivity of the various factors of production. All observers are agreed in recognising that the rapid growth of the Soviet economy from 1928 to 1940 and, again, from 1945 to 1973 derives essentially from a *forced* industrialisation (accumulation of capital in the producer goods sector) with a continual increase of the work force and a ruthless reduction of the standard of living of the population as a whole

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(and in particular of the *kolkhozniks*, tied as they are to the land). Although formulae of this sort carry little weight with the statisticians, the standard of living of the USSR in 1928 was not regained in Stalin's lifetime. It was not till the 1960s that consumers returned to something like what they were getting on the eve of the Five-Year Plans.

The "law of priorities" goes along with the obsession with producer goods. Everything works as if the Soviet planners made no distinction between *growth, capital accumulation,* and *mobilisation of the work force.* The targets in the priority sectors are only achieved by using more manpower than the Plans lay down. The result is overcapitalisation and a decline in the apparent growth rate of the productivity of capital. The apparent productivity of capital diminishes annually by 1.9% between 1928 and 1966, and by 3.9% between 1950 and 1962. During the latter period the annual growth rate of reproductive capital comes to 10.1%, of labour to 1.3%, the annual rate of growth of output per unit of total factor input to 2.6%. The apparent productivity of labour shows an increase of 4.7% per annum (revenue 6.2%, labour 1.4%); but that of capital shows a yearly decline.

TURNING FROM academic arithmetic to the facts of experience, Western businessmen who visit Soviet factories observe that a Western-type plant requires two or three times as many workers to run it. André Fontaine records (originally in an article in *Le Monde*, and then in his latest book*):

> The unconcern of the average Russian, whom no one would go so far as to describe as obsessed with productivity, does not seem all that unreal. But there is food for thought in the reply made by an Intourist guide to a French businessman who commented that definitely "people did not overstrain themselves in Russian factories". "And what if that is the superiority of socialism?" she said.

May I suggest to André Fontaine that he should pass on the good news that other contributor to *Le Monde*, Maurice Duverger, who claims that the obvious superiority of socialism is based on rationality? To applaud *disguised unemployment* and *overmanning* (when the planners are bemoaning the depletion of the total manpower reserves) provides an example of that odd Western knack of finding an excuse or a justification abroad for what they condemn at home.

André Fontaine also notes how many Russians are nowadays turning to moonlighting in order to top up their income "from the official job to which they devote less and less effort." The first generation of Bolsheviks would never have dreamt that the idleness of supernumerary workers and organisational inefficiency were to become the justification of socialism. Let us make no bones about this apparently paradoxical and yet inarguable proposition: *Productivity and work discipline are a secret which is kept by Europe—Europe the "decadent", the Europe of the trade unions and industrial strife.*

A PARADOX, or a profound truth? The greatness of modern civilisation arises, it seems to me, out of the never quite fulfilled endeavour to educate the entire population and to enable each to participate to some extent in the national culture. *Le travail industriel*, as Auguste Comte wrote, substitutes cooperation for military command. At every level the Russians seem to have conserved the sense of hierarchy and to have maintained the authority of the boss (this includes delegations of intellectuals or scientists to international congresses). Nothing runs more against the grain of our civilisation than the military style of command. Russian scientists like Kapitza and Sakharov see in the lack of communication and the absence of liberty the major cause of the inferiority of Soviet to American science.

There have been those who would have us believe that the "idleness" of the Russian worker was an expression of national character. The first generation, straight from the countryside, does not adapt without difficulty to the constraints of industrial activity. But today this explanation will no longer do. In reality, what creates "idleness" and overmanning is the absurdity of the system itself, the pretension to direct all enterprises from the centre rather than accord them the "autonomy" advocated in private (and sometimes even in public) by Soviet theoreticians themselves. The *kolkhozniks* appear to be idle when they are working in the collective fields for a low and sometimes derisory wage; but they are obviously not so on the private plot where they are working freely on their own behalf with a view to normal remuneration.

Although I am not in a position to demonstrate this proposition, I incline to judge as insufficient the classical interpretation of the low Russian standard of living in terms of the enormity of capital accumulation, and of arms expenditure. Certainly these two causes ought never to be overlooked—ordinary mortals do not eat tanks or machines. During the first Five-Year Plans, millions of country-dwellers were induced to migrate to the towns without the corresponding housing being built. Only in the last 15 years or so has the rate of construction increased, thereby enabling more favoured towns like Moscow to reduce the number of flats in multiple

* André Fontaine, *Le dernier quart de siècle* (Fayard, 1976), p.66.

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occupation.*

Account must always be taken of the other well-known defects inherent in the system. What use are tractors if spare-parts shortages mean that they are completely out of action as soon as they have a break-down? In the final analysis there are only two sorts of ultimate goods—consumer goods and armaments: those by which people are fed, clothed, and housed, and those by which the country is protected and its enemies killed. Heavy industry, whether we are dealing with steel or tractors, produces only intermediary goods; and the figures of the national product should be reduced by the amount of wasted investment (either in the case of multiple projects started simultaneously and remaining for many years incomplete, or of the lorries which emerge from the giant factory built with Western help but which do not improve the transportation of goods in proportion to their number).

Likewise, before measuring the standard of living it would be right to deduct (if also to add the free or low-cost social services) the time spent racing off to the shop where a new consignment of some wanted product has been reported. What the statistics do not reveal but which all the evidence confirms is the irregularity of supply and the persistence of queueing. Here again, these two phenomena are a consequence of the system: of all economic activities it is probably commercial shopkeeping (together with certain sectors of agriculture) which lends itself least readily to centralised organisation and ought reasonably to be left open to direct relations between business and business and to involve the maximum of diversity, as can be observed in the West where supermarket, hypermarket, and corner-shop work together, if not without friction. Compared with the evolution of trade in Western Europe, the Soviet distribution system undoubtedly belongs to another age, to quite another world.

Despite the deliberate brevity of this analysis it should suffice to illuminate my thesis. Yes, free Europe, even today, has not fully grasped its economic superiority over Eastern Europe. And I would like to recall, if in simple categorical terms, the various aspects of this superiority.

Towards a Balance-Sheet

THE FRENCH SOCIALISTS have published a small book on *la liberté* (or *les libertés*). The Communist Party is tabling *Un projet de loi sur les libertés*. Georges Marchais affirms: "*la liberté, c'est notre forte.*"

Now, every Soviet subject has to be in possession of a domestic passport. He may not settle in the town of his choice. He has no right to travel abroad without a permit; usually the specialist who receives such a permit goes alone, without his family. The Soviet rulers remain obsessed with fear of desertion by those very same people who are granted material advantages. Relations with foreigners are not forbidden, but they are compromising. Similarly, a fair amount of Soviet territory is still made up of areas totally closed to journalists. In the century of television and the computer, the *praxis* of Marxism-Leninism brilliantly illustrates the resistance of the political régime to the logic of technology.

The secret police, omnipresent, commands extensive forces (hundreds of thousands, both professional and amateur). The Gulag, compared with what it was under Stalin, has lost its monstrous dimensions. No one knows with certainty the number of prisoners in the camps (a million?); no one can count the exact number of the "deviationists" being cared for in psychiatric hospitals. But these practices of repression persist, even if from time to time Western protests manage to save a Plyushch or a Shtern, and even if a few tens of thousands of Jews have eventually won the right to emigrate.

AT THIS POINT the historian hesitates, for fear of saying either too much or too little. Is it enough to be removed from the "old days" (when each social category had to provide its percentage of criminals to the secret police) for the régime to be said to be changing its nature? The terror under Lenin, even at the time of War Communism, never attained the Ubuesque perfection of the Great Purge. Leonid Brezhnev has manifestly not terrorised his companions in the Stalin manner; for upwards of ten years there has been no wholesale replacement of staff to be observed in the ruling organs of Party and State. A collegial power holds sway at the top; and a bureaucracy of old men governs and administers the Empire; the No. 1 seems assured of his mastery over the potential new claimants. Soviet citizens, subjected to a permanent orthodoxy check, exert no direct influence over the decisions taken by the oligarchs.

These oligarchs, almost a half-century after the start of the first Five-Year Plans, retain their fidelity to the principles of what Stalin called "Building Socialism" and what I have called "socialist capital accumulation." The Planners, despite a vast bureaucracy, do not manage to follow what is happening from one end to the

* According to Jerry F. Hough, "The Brezhnev Era: The Man and the System", *Problems of Communism* (March-April 1976), living space per urban dweller expanded from 10.1 m² in 1964 to 11.8 in 1973. In 1975, 70% of families of blue- and white-collar workers had dwellings of their own.

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other of the Soviet Union, to trace the paths taken by the tens of thousands of different products. (Otto Sik once told me that in Czechoslovakia the Prague planners had effective control over about 1,200 out of 40,000 products.)

The planning of certain "priority sectors", which imperfectly translates the ambition for Total Planning, does not imply the regular, constant fixing of higher growth targets for Sector A (*i.e.* the heavy industries). Now the sole exception to this rule, that of the 1965–70 Plan, did not evince itself in the results: once again "the means of production" progressed faster than consumer goods. Why this obsession? Today more than ever the question arises, and it admits of no certain response.

Especially since 1962, the Soviet leaders have definitely transferred into the realm of armaments the desire (so often repeated since 1930) "to catch up and overtake the United States! . . . " Bear in mind the discrepancy between the present targets or projections for 1980 and those which appeared for the same date in Nikita Khrushchev's Twenty-Year Plan. The Khrushchev target being equal to 100, the Brezhnev target of today stands at 48 for electricity, 66 for steel, 60 for natural gas, 67 for coal, 62 for cement, 29 for plastics, 48 for synthetic fibres, 73 for cereals, 49 for meat (carcass weight), 54 for milk, 53 for eggs. Today's projections come near to yesterday's for only a small number of products—chemical fertilisers (110), crude oil (90), cotton (86), and beet (94).

Certainly the Five-Year and still more the Twenty-Year Plans belong to the realm of propaganda or bluster. Only the annual plans determine the production of the enterprises, in accordance with various imperatives and schedules. In the beginning, Stalin would ask his advisers for the relevant US figure and then set the Plan's target in a thoroughly arbitrary way. (A friend of mine, an Austrian physicist whose socialist faith took him to the Kharkov Physics Institute, had direct experience of the method and gave me his account.) Yet it remains strange that at the end of *half-a-century* socialist capital accumulation should still be in bondage to armaments or to itself.

SOVIET GROWTH—whose rate is falling, although still high—depends twice over upon Western growth. In those industrial sectors which show the fastest world-wide development over a given period, the Soviet Union consistently lags behind. The backwardness of the chemical and the electronic industries was discovered respectively by Khrushchev and by Brezhnev; and the practice is either to buy up ready-made factories or else have giant car or lorry works built by Western consortiums. In the advanced sectors, despite all its efforts, the Soviet Union sees the United States forging ahead.

More generally, all the direct evidence and first-hand observations reveal the inefficiency—or, to borrow Maurice Duverger's language, the *irrationality*—of socialism in the Soviet mode. The irrationality is twofold. Centralised authoritarian planning with arbitrary price-setting results in the wastage of capital and the duplication of grandiose complex plans which remain unfinished for months or years for lack of a given raw material.* The irrationality also afflicts the enterprise itself, whether the schedule gives rise to an allocation of the various products which is counter to real needs, or whether the workers respond with "idleness" to their poor living conditions and to an authoritarian organisation. Who but the Westerners—with their capital, their technology, and their manpower—will be building the hotels required in Moscow for the Olympic Games of 1980?

NEVERTHELESS, LET US NOT DENY the rise of the standard of living of the Russian people in the course of the last 15 years. Food consumption has changed as follows, in real terms. The consumption of meat per head has risen from 36 kg in 1958 to 53 in 1973; of milk and dairy products, from 238 to 307; of eggs (per unit), from 108 to 195; of vegetables, from 71 to 85; while potato consumption fell from 150 to 124 kg, and that of cereals from 172 to 143. The increase in high-grade foodstuffs and the decline of the others (bread or potatoes) follows the pattern of the West. All the same, the two disastrous harvests of 1972 and 1975 are a reminder of the vulnerability of Soviet agriculture to the hazards of nature.

Similarly, in the case of consumer durables, whose expansion was characteristic of the 1950–70 phase in Western Europe, the Soviet Union has belatedly followed suit. In 1965, 24% of families owned TV sets; by 1974 the number had risen to 70%. The percentage for refrigerators rose from

* Cf. Vassily Vassilev, *Rationalité du système économique soviétique* (unpublished), pp. 79, 93, 95. The author uses only Soviet sources. He throws light on the idleness of capital (in other words the non-employment of accumulated capital) due to projects not being finished or manpower not being available on the spot; at the same time the socialist countries are hovering between overhauling obsolete plant and new capital investment.

"Thus for the USSR the unfinished construction of new capacity has moved from 69% of the total volume of annual investment for the period 1960–65 to 77% in 1973, after a peak of 80% in 1969."

Delays in completion constitute a new form of **technological** unemployment.

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11 to 56; for washing machines from 21 to 62. Cars are still the preserve of a narrow minority. Statistics indicate an improvement in housing conditions; but these still appear primitive to observers, even in Moscow.

Estimating in roubles, the real income of wage-earners in both town and country (the *sovkhozes*) probably overtook that of 1913 between 1960 and 1965, rising by 1975 to 165 (1913=100), not counting various services provided free or at low cost by the collectivity. As for the real income of the individual *kolkhoznik*, even today it is probably less than it was in 1913 and, *a fortiori*, in 1928. (I take these figures from a book written in a neutral style by an economist who, moreover, forecasts a narrowing of the gap between the Soviet and the Western European standards of living, and who makes a distinction between real income and the standard of living.)*

Whether we are dealing with technological progress, labour productivity, or the standard of living, the Soviet Union certainly "gives us lessons"—by teaching us what *not* to do and by dissipating wild illusions.

Far from economic success being able to make up for the loss of liberties, this loss in fact proves counter-productive. The apparent disorder of the liberal democracies does not exclude a certain industrial discipline. Bureaucratic despotism continually recreates disorganisation both in the economy as a whole and within individual enterprises.

LET ME SAY IT once again: the essence of the modern economy is exchange and, therefore, the freedom of individuals; production, on the other hand, involves hierarchy, and therefore a partially authoritarian organisation. All the régimes of our time contain a tension between the freedom of the market and the discipline imposed upon the workers. The historic aberration of Sovietism is rooted in the extension of authoritarianism (partly necessary for production) into the *entire* economy, indeed to the point of its elevation as a principle of the régime, whereas it constitutes only an aspect of the modern constitutional system.

Can the Kremlin Change?

ALLOW ME A FLIGHT OF FANCY. Tomorrow, amid universal astonishment, the First Secretary of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the USSR announces a "new economic policy"—not a forced withdrawal, like Lenin's NEP, but a stage on the way towards Communism allowing full scope for individual initiative and collective self-management.

The sacred principles—"collective ownership" in agriculture and industry—will remain intact and inviolable. But the associated producers will grant each other the freedom of enterprise and exchange. The *kolkhozniks* will elect their own administrators and the division of labour between the collective and the private plot will be up to representatives who have everybody's trust. Dealers will buy all or part of the harvests, legally; and as a representative of the unity of the entire people the state itself will appear on the market as one buyer among many. In the same way, businesses—henceforth recognised as "units of associated producers", working within the framework of guidelines fixed by the Party—will enjoy a broad degree of autonomy as regards organisation, prices, and investment. "Planning schedules", now the object of permanent warfare between managers and bureaucrats, will disappear. If the greater part of business profits is paid to the state, a share is reserved for the staff, from the top of the ladder to the bottom. The commercial mode justly condemned by Marx when it tolerated the exploitation of the proletariat by the owners of the means of production changes its nature when it acts on behalf of the blossoming of socialism—"to each according to his work." Producers associate in order for each to increase his contribution to the common task and to be paid in proportion.

I DO NOT DOUBT—and I know hardly a single analyst of the Soviet economy who thinks otherwise—that in ten years Soviet industry would make up its technological lag and that the consumer would be at the top of the socialist community, with more and better to come.**

In other words, the Soviet Union—after 60 years and after untold suffering—still possesses the

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* Jovan Pavlevski, *Le niveau de vie en URSS de la révolution d'octobre à 1980* (Paris, Economica, 1975). The real salary per person does not accurately measure the standard of living. The number of pay-packets per household also has to be taken into account. Man and wife both work in the Soviet Union, which was not the case in the Russia of the Tsars. On top of the income which the *kolkhoznik* derives from the nationalised sector comes that from the private plot (the same goes for a large number of town workers). The industry of 1976 offers millions more differentiated, qualified, better-paid supplementary jobs than the industry of 1913. Some social services are provided free; others at low cost (housing). In the towns, living conditions have changed too much during the first half-century for the compared real salaries of 1913 or 1976 to make possible any rigorous evaluation of the rise in the standard of living.

** It goes without saying that the foregoing sketch of economic liberalisation does not define a régime. All sorts of versions would be possible.

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material and human equipment to have butter as well as guns, power as well as a higher living standard. With the present régime it is not doomed to *une chute finale*. It will go on advancing, but more and more slowly, and except in a few privileged sectors—armaments perhaps—it will not overtake the West, which goes on innovating in spite of (or because of) its crises. Prosperity, in the absence of abundance, is now within reach, but also unreachable. It would require the Kremlin leadership to take a leap in the dark, the sacrifice of a handful of their prejudices, upsetting the settled power of the old bureaucracy.

AT THE POINT REACHED by the Soviet economy, capital accumulation in the primitive version of the Five-Year Plans becomes absurd. The official economists themselves are writing that giving up certain plans, trying to complete still unfinished projects, and the envisaged reduction of accumulation, would all accelerate growth. Again, the politicians as well as the experts keep repeating that the 1975–80 Plan must go for "quality", the application to production as a whole of what has been called the scientific-technical revolution. But why should tomorrow be different from yesterday? The plan for quality heralds the official return to priority for "heavy industry", the production of the means of production. Certainly the heavy industry which provides fertiliser for farming is working for the consumer. All the same it would be cheaper to give the *kolkhozniks* an incentive for not leaving part of the crop to rot where it stands. In the state enterprises, what is holding up technical advance is the risk it involves, firstly of not fulfilling the Plan, secondly of having quotas raised when the planners discover the superior efficiency of the new machines. An economy which is simultaneously modern and bureaucratic suffers (to speak the jargon) from one major contradiction: all bureaucracies fear change, but a 20th-century industry can only keep a first-rank position by innovation. The Soviets are not overcoming this contradiction, even with the aid of the West.

Certainly, apart from the profound wrench which would be involved in changing the "commercial" minus to a plus, partial reforms in the direction of business autonomy, and a greater role for money and monetary results, seem possible and may even seem probable. Russia's émigrés give, I think, an interesting explanation of the rapid exhaustion of the wave of reforms. The Soviet economy, they say, is far less centrally planned than is realised by the Western specialists who, despite themselves, are more or less the prisoners of the Soviets' own fictions. The economy only works by virtue of the "grey" markets, unofficial exchanges between enterprises, and the activity of unaccountable middlemen. What volume is accounted for by this market (which the authorities tolerate because they recognise its usefulness, and penalise from time to time)? What profits does it involve? Some insiders give the considerable figure of 25% of the national product to the value of exchanges on this "grey" market! Here is the revenge of human nature upon dogma, and indeed the inevitable concomitant of a planning system always lagging behind real life. The émigrés say that *this* is what is paralysing reforms because it is taking their place; that this is what creates the individual's own investment in the operation of business enterprises and of the régime itself; and that it is this, too, which now and then turns into corruption or crime.

OF THE TWO BUREAUCRACIES, those of the Economy and of the Party, the latter fears more than anything the change which would bring to light its parasitic character. A régime which gives normal rewards to the associated producers has no need of special extra police and a whole ideological framework. As for the upper levels of the economic bureaucracy, when it draws up its plans and takes note of the depletion of the manpower reserve on the one hand and the untapped reserves of productivity on the other, it proclaims the new objective: the Quality Plan. It will not be implemented 100%; but neither will it remain a dead letter.

EVERY SOCIETY **manages to live with its own contradictions for a long time. Soviet society would only be threatened by what at the moment is an unlikely conjunction of the various conceivable crises: serious quarrels inside the power élite; frustration among the masses; active nationalism among the ethnically foreign populations; and open demands from the intelligentsia. The outside observer would be displaying fearful arrogance if he believed himself capable of forecasting the future of Sovietism either in the short or the medium term. He can and must warn against an illusion to which the generous fall victim: one may suppose that history is the tribunal before which men and peoples appear, but it has never judged in equity or in morality. It has always handed down ambiguous verdicts, their justice acclaimed without reserve by the victors alone.**

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6. *The Shadows of Euro-Communism*

THE PRESENT RECESSION bears no resemblance whatever to the final apocalyptic crisis envisaged by Marx a century ago and still anticipated by Marxists from time to time. Even accepting, as do certain Marxists, the fall in profitability of capital in recent years—as, in fact, seems to me probable—

this crisis is a phenomenon neither unprecedented nor definitive. Inflation tends to distort economic arithmetic, and produces the illusion that profits exist when with a stable currency these profits would be non-existent or far smaller than the figures in the books show. A long period of rapid growth with a large accumulation of capital leads naturally to a reduction in the latter's profitability. Wage increases, though tolerable for certain firms, tend to reduce the average profitability of capital if they become general.

Whatever the impact of these different factors in different countries, there is no justification for drawing any long-term conclusion from statistics, often of doubtful value, concerning profitability of capital. The development of the world economy is an *histoire*, not a regular process of evolution towards a predetermined end, whether catastrophe or paradise. After a quarter-of-a-century during which the problems of the 1930s seemed to have been solved, the world economy is now entering a new phase characterised by three major features:

1. A general system of floating currencies, with no ultimate link to any commodity, has been tried out. Such a system probably necessitates close cooperation between national authorities and perhaps measures to control the whole transnational concert. At the moment national governments possess neither the knowledge nor the determination required for the management of the world economy such as it has become. Currencies will continue to float in the years to come, for however far inter-state cooperation may progress, the fate of each country will depend primarily on the action taken by its national authority.

In theory, a system of generally floating currencies does not imply disparity in rates of inflation and therefore frequent profound changes in rates of exchange. The fact remains, however, that since 1971 (or 1973) the accompaniment of generally floating currencies has been general inflation and a gap which seems to be opening between the strong and weak currencies.* In the present situation what people fear is not a series of competitive devaluations but, on the contrary, strengthening of the strong currencies by revaluation and a nose-dive by the weak currencies through depreciation. The advantage accruing to British exports from the fall in the pound has been wiped out by the fall in unit price of goods exported (and even more by the rise in price of goods imported). At a certain point monetary devaluation continuously refuels domestic inflation—unless an effort at domestic deflation is made. Whether it is the cause or the effect of generally floating currencies, disparity in inflation rates leads to a progressive disintegration of the Common Market.

2. In none of the principal countries will a further dose of inflation lead to a resumption of "full employment." On the contrary, full employment and a satisfactory growth rate are more likely to result from a reduction in inflation and the ability of governments to create conditions enabling firms to find the resources required for productive investment. I do not think it inevitable, or even probable, that there will be progressive acceleration of inflation, condemning Western economies to radical reorganisation. The climate of the years to come, however, will differ from that of the post-War period and necessitate a leadership characterised by both firmness and wisdom.

3. I have used the words "firmness" and "wisdom" because the problem is dependent on the dialectic of economy and society. Inflation, it is said, is "an expression of the behaviour of social groups", but this behaviour springs in turn from that of the men responsible for the budget and above all for credit. Depending on the country and the situation the immediately operative causes of inflation seem to be either the power of pressure groups (in particular, the trade unions) or, on the other side, an excess of credit, an increase in the quantity of money available.

These features, whether novel or merely more pronounced than in the past, are less serious than the upheavals of the 1930s, if one looks at the history of Western economies. If they cause justified anxiety, this is primarily for political reasons. The Great Depression brought Hitler to power in Berlin. Will the 1973 inflation, the 1975-76 recession, and régimes of unbacked paper money bring the Communist party to power in Rome or Paris? Will they precipitate a collapse in Great Britain?

* In 1976-77 tourists were still coming to London to do their buying in order to take advantage of the low prices, as they did formerly in Germany or in Italy some two years earlier.

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Revolution & Instability

WHEN THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC celebrated its bicentenary a British journalist sang the praises of the USA in the following terms: Will Great Britain remain a free society if she does not contrive to arrest her economic decline? Will Italy preserve her liberties on the day that Enrico Berlinguer's party joins the government? What will happen to France under Georges Marchais? On the other hand who would not hazard a bet that the United States will elect a President in 1980 or 1984 and that they will remain a free society for the foreseeable future?

This contrast between the dubious fate of three of the principal Western European countries and the transatlantic Republic's assured future does not spring solely from differences in their respective economic situations or in the way the Americans have reacted to the recession and events of recent years. Political and personal freedoms are of the essence of the American experiment; they are basic to it. Whenever the Federal authorities decide to give a passport to a European, a Japanese or a Chinese, he becomes a citizen of the American Republic. In the United States, and in the United States alone, citizenship and nationality merge. In America the Federation was the offspring of a contract signed by the States, and the charter of freedom goes as far back into the past as the political entity itself. In Europe freedoms had to be wrested from the traditional authorities, in the case of France at the price of revolutionary violence. Certain ideas are common to both the American and the French Revolutions; these two revolutions are nevertheless fundamentally different, in origins, development, and consequences.

The American Revolution laid the foundation of the Republic and of freedom; the French Revolution ushered in wars lasting a quarter-of-a-century and left a ravaged nation as its legacy. The Jacobins were the tutors of the Bolsheviks. Though historically it was a failure, the French Revolution was turned by legend into a Promethean exploit; minds are still obsessed by the myth of the Revolution. Historically the American Revolution was a success and on the other side of the Atlantic it is regarded as definitively concluded; it requires neither repetition nor further prolongation.* The import of this revolution only became distorted when professors took pride in presenting it as "the midwife of the Nation", a nation comparable to those which have emerged from European de-colonisation in Asia and Africa. Before 1776 the American colonies were living and governing themselves on the English pattern; they protested against George III and his taxes in the name of freedom. They were groups of pioneering immigrants, societies who gave themselves their own laws. They did not break with the past as did France; they were the expression of its pristine principle, its crowning achievement.

Present-day Italian democracy dates only from the end of World War II; the Fifth French Republic is a mere 18 years old. The British régime alone uses titles which outclass those of the American republic in antiquity. There, though a threat exists, it is different from that to which Continental régimes are exposed. But enough of the historical background; let us now try to disentangle the various problems which together go to make up the West's political crisis.

ALL WESTERN COUNTRIES in the short term, the immediate future, have to meet the same economic challenges. They must restore the profit margins of the firms to cause industry to reinvest. They must gain acceptance of deceleration in wage rises (or even of temporary stability) to take account of the transfer of resources necessitated by deterioration in exchange rates and particularly by the rise in price of petroleum. They must create conditions for broad-based growth by expansion of productive capacity.

Endemic inflation is inseparable from this challenge; being both cause and effect, it becomes a symbol of economic crisis. There are only two ways of getting the better of it. One has been adopted by the Americans—a fall in real wages and acceptance of a degree of unemployment. The other has been adopted by West Germany—an incomes policy or a negotiated agreement with the trade unions, combined with a strict credit policy. Neither Great Britain nor Italy or France has been able or willing to get an incomes policy accepted via the market or by agreement. The results achieved by Italy in 1975 as a result of credit restrictions were nullified in 1976 by the operation of index-linked wages, absenteeism, and social unrest.

In France and Italy the recession is increasing the danger of defeat of the present Governmental majority and accession to power of a Communist party. At the same time this highlights the contradiction inherent in the régimes we call democratic —power results from rivalry between parties whose aims are different and sometimes incompatible. The constitutions do not ban from this competition parties which, in the event, would do away with it. The Nazi Party came to power through a procedure which, on paper, was in con-

* The Americans, nevertheless, consider that their Constitution provides a basis for the right to revolt against a despotic government; but revolt has nothing to do with revolution in the European sense.

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formity with the Weimar constitution. What would happen in the event of the "historic compromise", in other words a government formed by an alliance between the Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democrats? What would happen in France in the event of victory at the elections of 1978 by the Socialist-Communist coalition, or the election of a Socialist President in 1981?

Looking beyond the challenge of the recession and the inherent contradictions of a pluralist régime which tolerates action by parties hostile to pluralism, many people are asking an even wider-ranging question. Are democratic-liberal societies still governable? It is a curiously paradoxical question, for many fashionable ideologies are never tired of denouncing the oppression, or repression, in any case the alienation, from which the individual is said to be suffering. Meanwhile, other observers emphasise the weakness of omnipresent government, from which everything is demanded but which is not even capable of stopping trade unionism in the Armed Forces.

Our Changing Communists

LET ME START WITH the contradiction peculiar to liberal democracies. They postulate freedom for the enemies of freedom or, if you prefer to put it another way, in certain circumstances they are faced with the alternative of a *coup d'état* or the accession to power of a government which, in all probability, will destroy the régime which has given it its opportunity.

Obviously I am thinking of the Weimar Republic and the conquest of the Reich by Hitler and his Nazi Party. What is at stake today is the conquest of the State by the Communist party in Italy. (In France the Communist party would share power with the Socialist party, but on present reckoning the latter would have the greater number of deputies and would therefore hold the levers of power.) This being so, the question arises: what have West European Communist parties become, and what do they want?

Taking an overall view of Western Europe, it seems to me not far wrong to say that the Communist parties are going through a phase of decline. The French Communist party today collects about 20% of the votes, whereas in the post-War years its score was as high as 25%. In Portugal, after more than 50 years of authoritarian government, the Communist party only gained some 16% of the vote.* *Bien pensant* journalists, in particular those on *Le Monde*, ascribe this setback to ignorance on the part of the masses whose wits have been dulled by half a century of propaganda or "disinformation." If the reader will now think back, however, to the comparable merits of a Soviet-type or Western-type régime, he will wonder whether it was Salazar's Portuguese or rather some other Europeans whose wits have been dulled by propaganda. In the recent elections the distribution of votes in Spain was even more moderate than in Portugal; by far the greater part of the popular vote, including that of the working class, went to the Socialist party, not to the Communists, who received only 9% of the votes.

As against my argument of overall decline, it is only right to quote the 35% vote given to the Italian Communist party at the June 1976 elections and to point to the prospect of the Socialist-Communist coalition winning the 1978 elections for the French Assembly. One could also cite the congress of representatives of all European Communist Parties held in Berlin in June 1976—a congress held by some to be historic in that the Secretaries-General of the Spanish, Italian, and French parties quite openly demanded the right to decide on their tactics and strategy for themselves, challenged the slogan "Proletarian Internationalism", and loudly affirmed that the meeting was no longer suited to the nature of the Communist movement in Europe and would be the last of its sort. Furthermore, Soviet newspapers censored these "historic" propositions by the Secretaries of the fraternal parties whereas in Italy and France the Party press gave them maximum publicity, as it did to the more recent Soviet castigation of Santiago Carrillo.

ONE EXPLANATION hardly merits serious discussion: that it is all play-acting staged by the Western Communists with Kremlin agreement for the purpose of winning elections. A second, equally extreme but opposite explanation is no more worthy of attention: that, as of now, the change in the Communist parties is a *fait accompli*. As a starting point let us consider a plausible halfway house. The Communist parties of Western Europe are indeed keeping their distance from the Soviet Union: first, in order to win votes; secondly, because the fate of the countries of Eastern Europe holds certain lessons for them; finally, perhaps, because their picture of socialism or communism is different from that of the Kremlin ideologists.

If, in order to win elections in the West, it is henceforth necessary to reject "the model" or the tutelage of the Soviet Union, this fact is of sig-

* At the first Lisbon elections—for the Constituent Assembly; it did even worse at the 1976 election for the first legislative Assembly.

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nificance in itself, whether it is an altogether new development or merely more marked than in the past. We ought probably not to disregard the alternative proposition that Communist parties owe part of their originality, their influence, and their prestige to the links they maintain and the affiliation they claim with the First Socialist (or *soi-disant* socialist) Revolution in history. If Communist parties are plagued by a contradiction it is this: *ni avec elle, ni sans elle*. With Russia they are open to the charge of totalitarianism. Without her they can only fall back on a prosaic social-democracy or simple utopian longings. Where are they going if they simultaneously disown both Lenin's régime now run by Stalin's successors and the régimes run by Social-Democrats but still integrated into the world economy?

Questions for the Converted

AMONG THE CRITERIA to be used in estimating the sincerity of the Western Communist parties' conversion is the nature of their links with Moscow. In this respect the Italian party has been far ahead of the French. Togliatti himself seems to have grasped forthwith the implications of Khrushchev's 1956 speech; he was certainly not satisfied with the meaningless phrase "personality cult." In short the Italian Communist party has been taking the measure of and openly criticising the state of affairs in the Soviet Union for some 20 years. The same cannot be said of the French Communist party. Even among Party intellectuals, discussion of the USSR and the "personality cult" remains, willingly or not, strangely muted. The Secretary-General and the Politburo did condemn Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia but in a way which made the observer feel that French Communists were performing some ritual, or complying with some convention (or compulsion), and doing so without the slightest conviction.

Today Italian Communists would probably condemn "normalisation" in Czechoslovakia more vigorously than they did nine years ago. A remark attributed to Berlinguer—"it is easier to build socialism in Western Europe than in the East"—is perhaps revealing. The Secretary-General of the Italian Communist party knows perfectly well that the discipline of the so-called socialist camp in the East is maintained by the Red Army; if he genuinely wants "pluralist socialism" he still has a chance of building it but only outside the zone controlled by the Kremlin. Yet how can we believe in the sincerity of Berlinguer or Marchais (who has, somewhat belatedly, started off on the same line) when both continue to think of the world on the same lines as the men in the Kremlin and in international non-European politics adopt positions identical with those of the Soviet Politburo?

Here lies the first ambiguity in the line adopted by those Communist parties which are not vassals of Moscow. Why do they denounce Western "imperialism"? Why do they regularly take the side of Communist countries or movements if they are striving for "pluralist socialism", for the freedom inseparable from pluralism? To answer the same question differently: according to Marxism-Leninism, private ownership of the means of production implies exploitation of the workers through the surplus-value mechanism; it therefore implies imperialism as practised by the USA and all developed capitalist countries, France included, which are simultaneously allies, partners, and rivals of the USA. This global concept automatically ranges them on the side of the Soviet Union and those countries which profess Marxism-Leninism. Doubt only arises when those Marxist-Leninists who are adherents of Moscow and those who are adherents of Peking are opposed.

What is the global view of those who are not Marxist-Leninists? In their eyes the fundamental conflict in Europe lies between the totalitarian and the pluralist régimes. Sweden had been ruled by Social-Democrats for 44 years. She nevertheless still belongs to the Western community; her frontiers were always open; she has a multiplicity of parties, a free press, and business branches in various countries. In other continents the demarcation line is less clear-cut. Sometimes there is no choice other than between right-wing or left-wing authoritarian régimes, or alternatively between democratic but impotent régimes and authoritarian régimes.

DESPITE ALL UNCERTAINTIES the essential fact remains that during the Fourth Republic and, with certain slight divergencies, during the Fifth, France has normally come down in favour of non-Marxist-Leninist régimes or parties opposing Marxist-Leninist movements. On the diplomatic level, however, the view taken by West European Communist parties, as regards the Middle East and elsewhere, does not differ noticeably from that of the Soviet Union. One can only wonder, therefore, what would be the common diplomatic stance of the Christian-Democrats and the Communist party or (in France) of the Socialist/Communist coalition. The fact that France or Italy remains a member of the Atlantic Alliance on paper is not enough to guarantee NATO's survival in an effective and efficient form. Even in Europe the allies would be in danger of disagreeing in the event of crisis.

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Outside Europe they would find themselves in opposite camps.

A Communist party's link to Moscow does not disappear on the day when it claims and proclaims its autonomy. Though free to choose its tactics, the Italian Communist Party would not necessarily change its attitude to Israel or to Angola. So far there is nothing to show that the French Communist party regards Soviet domination in Eastern Europe as "imperialist" and the American presence on the demarcation line as "non-imperialist." Georges Marchais has not so far followed Enrico Berlinguer in stating that the West offers socialism better prospects than the East; but then neither has Berlinguer drawn the logical consequences from his remark.

IN OTHER WORDS, TO JUDGE FROM the statements of the most "advanced" protestants among Euro-Communists, they are still halfway between loyalism to the Rome of yesterday and their announced reformation. Each of these parties maintains that it has sole responsibility for its actions but all of them interpret the world situation in the same way; partially at least, therefore, they are reconstituting the International from which they are supposed to be withdrawing. Each wishes to paint its socialism the colour of its national flag but none of them has explicitly repudiated Marxism-Leninism which, from Lenin to Brezhnev, is the basis and justification for the Muscovite ideocracy.

NOR IS THIS ALL. The Western Communist parties are reverting to the theme of the "non-violent road" to socialism but do not commit themselves on the vital question of the end-aim. In other words, would their socialism—Italian, French, or Spanish—look like that of West Germany or Sweden, or like that of the Soviet Union? Do alliances with Socialists or Christian-Democrats testify to a lasting spirit of reciprocal toleration, or are they temporary adroit manoeuvres? Once in power would they still permit the present cultural diversity, the wide variety of public opinion and schools of thought? The hallmark of "pluralism"—to use this devalued (because much-abused) word—is not solely, or rather not *essentially*, inter-party competition. It is rejection of spurious unanimity, of intellectual conformism imposed by an ideology and embodied in a party or a man, conducive to both fanaticism and indifference. On this point there is nothing to prove that the Euro-Communists have achieved or even embarked on their conversion.

Two things stand in the way of this conversion. For 50 years now a Communist has been known by his adherence both to Moscow and to Marxism-Leninism. It is not enough merely to say, as did Santiago Carillo, the Spanish Communist leader, that "Moscow is no longer Rome" or that "Rome is no longer in Rome." There must also be a break with Moscow's interpretation of Communist ideology and an abandonment of the specifically Communist type of party organisation. Who does not see a reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship between "democratic centralism" and the role attributed by Lenin first to his Bolshevik party and finally to himself? Democratic centralism came from the necessities of clandestine revolutionary action, but also from the transfer of the so-called "historic mission" from the working class to the Party. When organised on democratic lines, a working-class party is in danger of embarking on the same slippery slope as the trade unions, that of putting the immediate material interests of the workers above the task given them by History. But who grasps the truth of history-in-the-making if not the Marxist intellectual? Who can graft the doctrine of revolutionary Marxism on to the workers' movement? Euro-Communist adherence to Western democracy therefore postulates conversion on internal as well as external matters.

As long as these parties resemble an army of militants under the authority of a few, as long as they are prepared to do an about-turn either to the Right or Left when so ordered, no one will take even their most solemn declarations literally. Maurice Thorez, for instance, starting with "*classe contre classe*" tactics, then offered an olive branch to the Christian-Democrats; from 1935 to 1939 he was anti-fascist but from 1939 to 1941 refused to take part in the "imperialist war"; from 1941 to 1945 he resumed the struggle against Hitler's Third Reich but in 1947 he revoked the union with "bourgeois democrats" forged during the *Résistance*. To remove the risk of similar successive and spectacular about-turns, the party structure must be changed fundamentally.

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY differs from the French. For years the latter withstood the impact of Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Party Congress. It was still Stalinist when the party in the USSR had officially ceased to be so. The Italian party learnt the lesson much more quickly. How could Party Infallibility survive that of the man who had been its embodiment for so long. Even if the Soviet régime had not *necessarily* produced a Stalin, it had at least made him possible. In the West, criticism of Stalin gradually developed into criticism of Soviet socialism; so from 1956, little by little, without a stir and

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without a break, the Italian party moved away from the Kremlin. In June 1976 Berlinguer spoke from the East Berlin rostrum of the Congress of European communist parties as representative of a national autonomous party, and he did not draw down on his head thunderbolts from Leonid Brezhnev. On the contrary, Brezhnev received him and congratulated him on his recent success in the Italian elections.

Things went differently with Georges Marchais. He seems to evoke as much hostility from Leonid Brezhnev as he himself feels for the men in the Kremlin. After Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's victory, the French Communist party suddenly launched a campaign against the Socialist party in the autumn of 1974. Then, not without occasional outbursts of polemics, it returned to *l'Union de la Gauche*. Despite the advance of the Socialists as proved by the local elections of 1976, it is playing the United Left card more strongly than ever. It has accordingly sacrificed at least one ingredient of its orthodoxy: it has thrown overboard the sacrosanct formula of "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

For a party based on ideology—and therefore with a tendency to scholasticism and theology—changes of vocabulary carry a significance barely comprehensible to infidels. By renouncing dictatorship of the proletariat and accepting power-sharing with non-Marxist-Leninist parties has, then, the French Communist party given proof of a genuine conversion?

The French party was Stalinist longer than any other Communist party in the West. It moved away from Moscow by renouncing "the dictatorship of the proletariat", and with such brutal abruptness that it only confirmed the persistence of the old party-line "democratic centralism." This unlikely conversion seems even less credible when a man like Jean Kanapa—the very prototype of Stalinism, with his party-line conformity, his intellectual servility and mediocrity—can become the party's official spokesman.

WESTERN EUROPEANS **dare not seek salvation where they too would only find slavery. The cause is not yet lost or won. The struggle between the totalitarian temptation and liberal ideals continues and will continue as far ahead as we can see. The liberties we enjoy in the West have the fragility of humanity's most precious acquisitions.**

Hill Walls

It set out—
Splendours burst against its brow
Broke over its shoulders.
The hills heeled, meeting the blast of space.

The stone rigging was strong.
Exhilarated men
Cupped hands and shouted to each other
And grew stronger riding the first winters.

The great adventure had begun—
Even the grass
Agreed and came with them,
And crops and cattle—

No survivors.

And here is the hulk, every bone shattered.
A few crazed sheep
Pulling its weeds
On a shore of cloud.

Ted Hughes

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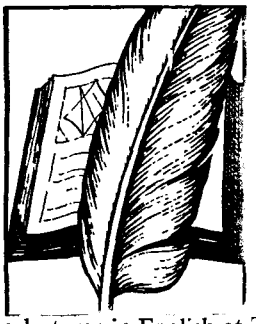

Column

IN A PREPOSTEROUS book, *Children of the Sun*,[1] which has had a great success in the United States, Mr Martin Green has given us what he calls "a narrative of 'Decadence' in England after 1918." Mr Green is a lecturer in English at Tufts University, and his book, which reads more like an extended gossip column than a work of literary history, appears to have made a strong appeal to American readers, perhaps because it will tend to confirm them in the view they have already formed that the English are already so far gone along the road to ruin that there is really nothing more to do except to contemplate, if not to understand, their decline and fall. With two such spokesmen on our behalf in the United States as Mr Green and Mr Peter Jay we really have no need of enemies there; but whereas Mr Jay can produce some very good and convincing evidence for his gloomy predictions about our future, Mr Green's book reads as if it had been compiled from an assiduous study of William Hickey between the wars.

Mr Green's view is that the two most important and influential figures in what he calls "the imaginative life of English culture" after 1918, and hence chiefly responsible for our cultural decline, were Harold Acton and the late Brian Howard. They were, he thinks, the central characters, and the spiritual begetters, of a group of young men and women who between the wars dominated our cultural and artistic life and, exerting an influence which, extending far beyond their immediate circle, infected the whole of the English intelligentsia, if such they might be called, with the germs of their own decadence.

In order that we should have no doubt about whom these young men were, he gives us a list of some 40 of them, all born between 1901 and 1911. It begins, improbably enough, with John Strachey and Christopher Hollis, and ends, equally improbably, with Randolph Churchill, Guy Burgess and Kim Philby. I myself, to my considerable surprise, creep in, alongside Stephen Spender, in 1909; earlier years gave birth to A. L. Rowse, Malcolm Muggeridge, Claud Cockburn, Tom Driberg, Alan Pryce-Jones and Cecil Beaton, along with some others, like Evelyn Waugh, Henry Green, Graham Greene, Wystan Auden, who are perhaps more deserving of a serious literary critic's attention. These persons, it seemed, formed the cultural ruling class of the England of their day, or what Mr Green would prefer to call The Gang, because he is deeply infected by the conspiracy theory of cultural history which he has inherited from his revered teacher and master, Dr Leavis; and they all shared a common life-style and an attitude to art and literature which originated, directly or indirectly, with the arch-priests of their cult, Acton and Howard.

One has to admit, in favour of Mr Green's theory, that at least it has the merit, and novelty, of originality; only it is the originality of some mad inventor who designs a flying-machine with no visible means of taking off, or of some political theorist who gravely informs us that the most important British statesmen between the wars were Captain Cunningham-Reid and Mr Chips Channon. I very much hope that Mr Green's no doubt eager and intelligent pupils at Tufts University will not take him seriously as a guide to English culture in the years he has chosen to make his own; otherwise they will certainly come away from their studies with as absurdly distorted a view of English society as if they had devoted their happy days at Tufts to an exclusive study of *Vogue* or "Jennifer's Diary."

MOST OF THE CHARACTERS in Mr Green's absurd list of *dramatis personae* are or were at one time or another friends or acquaintances of mine, and for some of them I preserve an affection which is all the stronger because so many of them are now dead. Some were highly gifted and talented; some were buffoons; some, like John MacBride in Yeats's poem "Easter 1916", were drunken, vainglorious louts. But none of them, I think, who are still alive to read Mr Green's imaginative fairy tale will fail to be astonished at the importance Mr Green attaches to their youthful follies and extravagances. None will be more surprised, I think, than Sir Harold Acton himself, who is happily still with us, and has since written an excellent autobiography, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, and become an admirable historian of 18th-century Naples. Certainly when I went up to Oxford in 1928, Acton's name had already become a legend, but it was not a legend of his artistic genius or even of his personal eccentricities, but of his beautiful and imperturbable good manners, as displayed most notably one day when visiting Mrs Beazley, wife of the great Professor Beazley, who kept a domesticated goose as a house-pet; faced, when her door opened in answer to his ring, with a hissing goose on the doorstep, Mr Acton leaped lightly and gracefully over it, while at the same time, in mid-air, taking off his hat to Mrs Beazley. This, it was felt at the time, was a feat of which any under-

[1] *Children of the Sun.* By MARTIN GREEN. Constable, £7.50.

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graduate might be proud; but it was not the kind of thing to make of Harold Acton the artistic guru Mr Green conceives him to have been.

As for poor Brian Howard, good manners were not his sort of thing at all, but rather a kind of brutal aggression which sometimes passed for wit; but wit and personal beauty are not in themselves sufficient to make a reputation, even among the young, and by the time he took his own life no one was more bitterly conscious than Howard himself of how totally he had wasted whatever talent he once possessed or the opportunities which life had showered upon him. Even Mr Green is hard put to it, search where he will among the gossip-columns, to find any evidence whatsoever for the kind of influence he ascribes to Howard, except 13 reviews in the *New Statesman*. In the end, it was not any kind of intellectual achievement but a passionate love affair which gave Howard's life a kind of dignity which it had never previously possessed. If it were not for Marie-Jacqueline Lancaster's biography; *Brian Howard: Portrait of a Failure*, it is likely that he would have been almost totally forgotten, except by personal friends, and by now there are not many of them left. His was a name that was truly writ in water and even by the '50s its outline had already become faint and indistinct.

MR GREEN'S BOOK, however, is not only fundamentally misleading in its assessment of Acton's and Howard's importance as cultural figures; he does not even seem to understand very well the kind of society in which they functioned and played their modest parts, and this seems odd because after all Mr Green is an Englishman himself and has had plenty of opportunity to study how that society worked. It perhaps does not matter so much that he conveys the general impression that all his Children of the Sun went to public schools, and mostly to Eton, and from there proceeded as a matter of course to the older universities where they became *aficionados*, under the tutelage of Acton/Howard, of Diaghilev, the Ballet Russes, and the Commedia del Arte and cultivated the pleasures of Dandyism, in which,

> in its simplest form, the young man loves his own beauty and makes that love insolently manifest in his clothes, posture, manners, conversation, judgements, imposing on everything a style that defies the "mature" values of his father and mother.

This is perhaps simply the extravagance of a wrong-headed idea pushed to absurd excess; but what is one to make of the statement that Stephen Spender recruited Isaiah Berlin into "the Auden gang", a situation to which surely only Max Beerbohm at his best could do justice? Only Beerbohm would have enjoyed it for its absurdity; Mr Green takes it seriously. One often comes across critics with whom one disagrees and, more rarely some whom one knows with certainty to be in the wrong; but it is not often that one meets critics who display the quite exceptional quality of silliness which Mr Green exhibits.

Nor is Mr Green a much surer guide to the economic structure of the society of which he offers so elaborately distorted a picture. In the 1930s, he informs us,

> the structure of the general consciousness shifted as people became aware that seventy-five per cent of British families were working class, earning about £4 a month; twenty-five per cent were middle class, earning about £4–£10; and only five per cent were upper class, earning more than £10.

Statistically, sociologically, politically and culturally these figures are almost totally meaningless; they almost completely obscure the real changes that were taking place in English life in the '30s; and for that reason they fail to explain the shift, such as there was, in what Mr Green calls "the structure of the general consciousness."

I MYSELF THINK, looking at Mr Green's figures, of my companions in the sixth form of my grammar school in Wales. All of us, sons of tradesmen, butchers, schoolteachers, bookmakers, bank officials, or, as in my own case, Methodist ministers, just about qualified, within a fairly narrow margin, for that privileged 5% minority within which, Mr Green tells us, his Children of the Sun had almost exclusively operated. But nothing in the world could have persuaded us that we belonged to the upper classes, or that we were potential recruits for the *jeunesse dorée* which so fascinates Mr Green. Our station in life, our cultural traditions, our social relationships were much closer to those of the working class than to those of the upper class to which, on Mr Green's definition, we should have belonged, and if we did so belong we were blissfully ignorant of it and perfectly happy in our ignorance.

It is always dangerous to generalise about the English class system, because its marvellously dense and intricate ramifications are, or were in the period of which Mr Green writes, apt to make nonsense of any rules which might be framed about it, as a jungle might defeat any attempt to reduce it to a set of blueprints. One useful guide through its wilderness was once produced by Bertrand Russell when he defined a gentleman as someone whose grandfather had an income of over £1,000 a year. By such a standard, very few of Mr Green's Children of the Sun would, to the chagrin of some of them, have qualified as gentlemen, but Mr Green writes of them as if they all shared precisely the same social origins, and in doing so he deprives both them of their individuality and the society to which they belonged of

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its richness and diversity. Decadent, indeed, it may have been; but it was not for the reasons which Mr Green suggests.

★

IN *Children of the Sun* Mr Green has tried to recreate a legend which never really existed, and indeed he seems to have bamboozled a good many Americans into taking it seriously; in his new biography of T. E. Lawrence,[2] Desmond Stewart has gone very far to demolish a legend which, during the very period when the Children of the Sun were flourishing, imposed itself on men's imaginations in a way that has rarely been equalled. For Lawrence was a man who became a myth in his own lifetime; the very title of Lawrence of Arabia seemed to endow him with all the mystery and magic of the desert, of a-thousand-and-one nights, under the naked stars, of unimaginable splendour and heroism.

Mr Stewart's book has, not surprisingly, received a mixed reception, for we do not like to have our myths destroyed, more especially if they are myths which have been created in our own lifetime, when it seems as if men have lost both the material and the faculty for myth-making, and anyone who engages in such a task must be prepared to meet the indignation of those who feel that they have been stripped of some precious possession.

What was the myth of Lawrence, and who created it, and why did it exercise so much power over minds as different as those of Winston Churchill, Bernard Shaw, Wystan Auden, Christopher Isherwood, André Malraux, Robert Graves, not to mention thousands of the less famous to whom the legend of Lawrence seemed to have brought to life a dream which all of them, in an infinite variety of different ways, had cherished in their inmost hearts? It was the myth of a young man who, in time of war, had abandoned a life of scholarship and in a strange land had placed himself at the head of a noble and simple people in revolt against centuries of oppression, and after enduring the extremes of hardship, danger, loneliness, humiliation, had ridden through the sands of the desert and finally led them in triumph to a victory which had restored them to their freedom and the holy city of their dreams. It was the myth of the scholar and artist turned Hero and with a will steeled by suffering making reality out of a dream; and yet, at the very moment of victory, discovering that he and his desert army had been betrayed by the corrupt bargains and intrigues of statesmen and politicians, so that in disgust he abandoned the glories of the world to seek a life of obscurity and anonymity in which to write the epic of which he was himself the hero. Art for a moment had triumphed over reality, and reality had taken its revenge, but now once again the artist had triumphed by retranslating reality into the timeless perfection of art.

THERE WAS IN THIS LEGEND something which had an irresistible charm for a generation for whom every ideal of courage, self-sacrifice, love of country, of parents, of friends, of freedom, had been irredeemably smirched and muddied by the indescribable agonies of the War in Europe. War on the Western front had been a filthy business; war in the desert had been pure and clean, with something of the quality of a Greek epic, in which men proved their virtue in action, and action acquired the quality of art, and art itself was simply the means of celebrating the dignity of the Hero.

Mr Stewart has subjected this legend to the most rigorous and sceptical examination, and has had no difficulty in demonstrating that, as we had already come to suspect, it was indeed a myth, which bore very little relation to reality. Certainly Lawrence as Hero was a flawed hero, not because he was a homosexual, a flagellant, a congenital liar and exhibitionist, but because the exploits on which his legend depended were very largely the product of his own invention. And equally Lawrence as Artist was a deeply flawed artist; *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is indeed a kind of masterpiece, as Lawrence had intended, and yet it is a masterpiece which again and again, both in its style and in its content, gives the ring of base metal.

What Mr Stewart has to tell us on such matters is by no means new, but no one before has carried out the demolition work with quite such thoroughness or with such exact and meticulous scholarship. And yet, curiously enough—and it is one of the book's great merits—its effect is not to destroy but to increase one's admiration of Lawrence, because of the degree to which he was the author of his own myth. He worked at it as others labour at a work of art, so that one can say it was his greatest creation, beside which either his military exploits or his written works were small and imperfect things. Even after all the criticism to which Mr Stewart has subjected Lawrence, in the end his life still retains its power over the imagination as few others in this century have done. For the mysteries, the equivocations, the inventions, the downright lies which Lawrence wove about himself all somehow finally combined to give reality to the dream he had conceived under the blazing sun and naked sky of Arabia, and in the end it was the dream and not the reality which mattered. R

[2] *T. E. Lawrence.* By DESMOND STEWART. Hamish Hamilton, £7.50.

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Roy Fuller

Saints and Stoics

To P. H. Newby

Forced down the wild peninsula, the saints
Crossed to the island craved by no one else.
Beyond that, only Atlantis, paradise.
Pathetic the resting places on the way:
This mousy church, in size a mere waiting-room
(As earth for human life, so some assert)—
A native font; decaying mural daubs;
Thatched roof; three-letter date cut in the wall.
By the remains of the ash-grove, hop vines
And fruit trees that sustained the bygone fathers.
And round the churchyard, egg-shaped in the custom
Of long ago, the danesberry flourishes still,
Imagined by the advancing soldiery
To have an aphrodisiac effect.
Mavises litter the horizontal tombs
With broken snail-shells. Under the altar rests
A seven-foot saint who may have named the church.

They say completion of the Parthenon
Left so many marble-carvers on the market
Even the country gods began to get
Marmoreal dedications. Quite unlike
The parsimonious art-work here. There are
Only three windows. Being illiterate
The congregations needed little light;
Two would have served, but lepers had a hole
Through which to see, as from cheap theatre places,
The Abbot raise the Blessed Sacrament.

Shrimps and their shadows on the contoured sand
Of the shallows: oddly, the shadows more apparent.
Today the tide had white-trimmed waves and so
The air to the arching sky seemed full of sound.
Late afternoon the sea turned a deeper blue:
Orange-burned bathers, distant reds and yellows
Of parasols and clouts for modesty
Were clustered as by a water-colourist.

Appearance of the second crop of teeth:
The change from prettiness to embryo
Femme fatale. And the continual rise
Of capable, strong, industrious characters—
Sure to prolong the *patria*'s repute—
Detected first in beauteous or precocious
Children. Such things almost relied upon
To cheer up later years, when bodily ills
Of old seem benign compared with new arrivals,
So that one comes to yearn for them as for
Even unsatisfactory former loves.

Yes, then the world was ready to be saved
But somehow the opportunity was missed.
Grass grew up through the long straight street designed

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To hold the border city. Since myself
Had gone back home from years of consular exile
The letters from my stoic mentor ceased.
And time elapsed before the waves began
Of other, more barbarous, infidel invaders:
Yet somehow the opportunity was missed.

Sea winds at night still peal the ghostly bell.
Sleepless, I hear it, back on the frontiers of
The empire. But who else is there to hear;
The congregation shrivelled, lepers cured?
And somehow I've become as old as him
Who sent those epistles in former years and briefly
(It seems) preceded me in saying goodbye
To a strange world. Act of no significance:
For men of science the difference between
Past, present and future is a mere illusion,
Granted a stubborn one. My teacher wrote:
"The queer thing is, about our growing old,
We slowly lose our sense of being with
The here and now: one's as it were transposed
Into infinity, more or less alone,
No longer with hopes or fears, only observing."
That's how I feel, though much less stoical!

Camomile on the dunes, astounding flowers—
Gold, white and tough as those recurring children.
And half sunk by sand, a hulk as sparely ribbed
As if the remains of one that brought the pirates.
An oar-winged wasp probed each of them in turn;
And peering in the rotten, sea-blanched timber
I made out the entrance to a nest—what dim,
Romantic, ingenious columns stretched beyond,
Home for the insect, gothic galleries!
The triumph of instinct there as ours is
The triumph—I was going to say "of thought"
Then thought of what goes on in man below.

Answering questions in my seminars
Put by the most assiduous attenders
(Neurotics, provincial boys, unwashed old girls),
I say: "Don't fret. Most humans contemplate
With terror the end of life. But that's a way
Of nature to conserve the species: rationally
The fear's unjustified. There's no more risk
Of disaster to the dead than to those unborn."

Possibly swallows were nesting in the barn
Even in saints' times, feigning mere delight
In air, or aerial insect-gobbling, then
Swooping in at the broken door. Unlike the saints
They know from fate how vain it is to pray
For the coming of God's kingdom on this earth.

When, as it will, the empire shrinks and again
I'm ordered home, who will recall the days
When saints were living, smelly, island men?

NOTE: I must acknowledge sources used with little or no alteration, namely: a notice in the *TLS* by Peter Levi of Martin Robertson's *A History of Greek Art*; Banesh Hoffman's *Albert Einstein: Creator and Rebel*; and the anonymous author of a cyclostyled leaflet about St Beuno's Church, Pistyll.

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ART

Did Spinoza Ever Sit for Rembrandt?

Speculations in Amsterdam—By PETER DE MENDELSSOHN

SPINOZA, born in the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam in 1632, was not quite twenty-four when the great ban was read aloud in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam and his expulsion from the Jewish community proclaimed. The leaders of the council declared that, having long known the evil opinions and works of Baruch de Espinoza, they endeavoured by divers ways and promises to withdraw him from his evil ways, and they were unable to find a remedy. On the contrary they had every day more knowledge of the abominable heresies practised and taught by him, and of other enormities committed by him, and had of this many trustworthy witnesses, who deposed and bore witness in the presence of the said Espinoza, and by whom he stood convicted. All of which having been examined in the presence of the elders, it was determined with their assent that the said Espinoza should be excommunicated and cut off from the nation of Israel. And now he was excommunicated with the following anathema:

> ". . . With the judgment of the angels and the saints we excommunicate, cut off, curse and anathemise Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of the elders and of all this holy congregation, in the presence of the holy books: by the 613 precepts which are written therein, with the anathema wherewith Joshua cursed Jericho, with the curse which Elisha laid upon the children, and with all the curses which are written in the law . . . And we warn you that none may speak with him by word of mouth nor by writing, nor show any favour to him, nor be under one roof with him, nor come within four cubits of him, nor read any paper composed or written by him."

Spinoza wrote his reply to his former teachers, not in Hebrew or Dutch but, strangely enough, in Spanish. "This compels me to nothing which I should not otherwise have done if I had not wished to avoid scandal", he said. "But if this is what is desired, I tread the path that has been opened to me with pleasure, consoled by the knowledge that my departure will be more innocent than that of the Jews from Egypt, though my livelihood is no better assured than theirs was. I am depriving no one of anything and, whatever injustice may be done me, I can claim that my conscience is clear."

He left for the village of Oudekerke, where a friend gave him hospitality, for he could no longer feel secure in Amsterdam, particularly in the Jewish quarter, where one night not long before two fanatical Talmud students had set upon him and tried to stab him.

His excommunication took place on 27 July 1656. On the day before, 26 July, a no less sensational event took place in the same quarter of Amsterdam. Only a few yards from the Portuguese Synagogue, in the Jodenbreestraat, "the Jewish Broad Street", was the house of the famous painter, collector, and art dealer Rembrandt Harmensz Van Rijn. On that 26 July he was declared bankrupt and the city fathers appointed a trustee to administer his estate; in the next few months his pictures, his collection of art objects, all his goods and chattels and his fine house itself were sold off by public auction to pay his creditors. Rembrandt was fifty at the time. He never completely got rid of his debts, and henceforward lived quietly, devoting himself solely to his art. The great works of his final period include the portrait of an unknown young Jewish student, now in the Cleveland Museum in the United States, suggesting the tantalising idea that it could be, must be, a portrait of the young Spinoza.

But did the two even know each other?

LOOKED AT superficially, the events of 26 and 27 July were no more than a chance coincidence of

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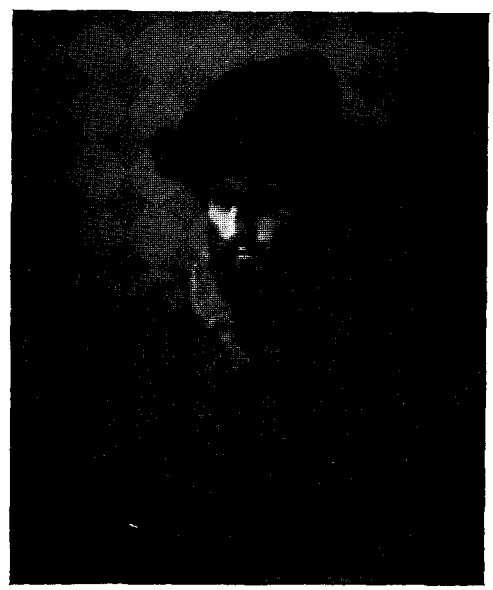
two sensational events in the life of the small Jewish quarter of Amsterdam. The two names must have been on everybody's tongue. A famous painter bankrupt and ruined! The most brilliant young man in the Jewish community, for whom an outstanding career as a rabbi had been predicted by his teachers, condemned as a heretic and banished from the community for teaching false doctrine and leading astray passionately religious young students of the Talmud. There must have been no end to the excited gossip in the narrow alleys in which everyone knew his neighbours.

But if this was a chance coincidence, it was not the only one. In Holland at that time one came of age only at twenty-five. Consequently Spinoza, who was twenty-four at the time of his excommunication, had had a guardian since his father's death two years before. This was the Amsterdam citizen Louis Crayer, whom the city fathers also appointed guardian of Rembrandt's son Titus (nine years younger than Spinoza and just fifteen at the time of his father's bankruptcy). The appointment of a guardian for young Titus had less to do with his father's bankruptcy than with the fact that the painter was living in sin with the housemaid Hendrickje Stoffels. This, needless to say, was highly disapproved of by the city fathers, who several times vainly summoned the "whore Stoffels" to appear before them. After all, the painter, though his mother was a Catholic, belonged to the Calvinist State-Church.



REMBRANDT: YOUNG JEWISH STUDENT
(*Cleveland Museum*)

HISTORIANS have of course not failed to note the coincidence of the two disasters of 1656. Carl Gebhardt, the distinguished student of Spinoza, says, for instance, that the consequences were similar for both. The bankrupt painter was banished from bourgeois society and the renegade philosopher was excluded from his religious community: in other words, each was cut off from the world into which he was born.

That constitutes a link of sorts, but not a very close or substantial one. For Rembrandt was not banished from society after his bankruptcy. True, he lived a quiet and retired life, but he was given important and highly paid commissions as before; and Spinoza quite consciously and deliberately left the world of his fathers, though without joining any other religious community.

Other scholars have contrasted the very different temperaments and philosophies of life of the two contemporaries, have seen links between them, or united them in an inner creative unity under the great dome of the Dutch Baroque. Only one student, so far as I know, has gone into the question that would provide a basis and a living meaning to all such ideas; whether their paths ever crossed and whether they knew each other. And if they met, what would they have talked about? The student in question, the distinguished German art historian Wilhelm Reinhold Valentiner, published a great deal of information bearing on the question in a short study published in London in 1957.[1]

One thing is, I think, clear immediately. At the time of the two disasters the two must certainly have known of each other, and not only through Louis Crayer. Rembrandt was on good terms, if not on terms of actual friendship, with the elders of the Portuguese Synagogue, Rabbi Saul Levi Monteira and Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel. He made portraits of both. There is an etching of Rabbi Manasseh, and a painting of Rabbi Monteira hangs in the Uffizi at Florence. These two teachers of the young Spinoza must certainly have talked to the painter about their brilliant pupil, the star of the Talmud school. It was Monteira who announced Spinoza's excommunication; he was the more orthodox, reactionary, and fanatical of the two. Rabbi Manasseh was more conciliatory, kindlier, more understanding, more broad-minded. Had he been in Amsterdam, he might perhaps have prevented the excommunication or at any rate modified it, but he was in England, trying to negotiate with Cromwell the readmission of Jews to the Commonwealth, and he died on the journey home.

[1] ED. NOTE—Unfortunately the Phaidon Press edition of his *Rembrandt and Spinoza: A Study of the Spiritual Conflicts in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (London, 1957) is out of print. It deserves a new edition. (See the excerpt in adjoining box.)

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Spinoza must have seen the famous painter hundreds of times in the street, and it is inconceivable that he should not have known him, at least by sight. For all his detachment and other-worldliness, he had nothing against painters; on the contrary, he sought them out and obviously took pleasure in their company. After he left Amsterdam he lived for six years as a tenant in the house of the painter Daniel Tydemann at Voorburg, near The Hague; and subsequently he lived for another six years in the house of the painter Van Der Spyck, where he remained until his death in 1677. Spinoza was himself a gifted draughtsman. His first biographer, his contemporary Colerus, mentions a lost sketch-book in which he drew a portrait of himself in

"Two Geniuses"

SPINOZA AND REMBRANDT *represent two opposing conceptions in the Dutch culture of the 17th century: the rationalistic and the intuitive.*

Although during a certain period they lived almost next door to each other, though they had common friends and may well have met at one time or another, they could never have been mutually attracted. Rembrandt counted amongst his friends the orthodox Rabbis Manasseh ben Israel and Monteira, both of whom were Spinoza's adversaries. Spinoza on the other hand, though he was not averse to art, must have been frightened by Rembrandt's far-reaching, unrestrained imagination: indeed he once said:

"Men of great imaginative power are less fitted for abstract reasoning, whereas those excelling in intellect and its use keep their imagination more restrained and controlled, holding it in subjection, so to speak, lest it should usurp the place of reason."

This fits the character of the two men: Rembrandt the man of strong sentiment, Spinoza the man of intellect. Their private lives correspond to these characteristics. Spinoza was well balanced, self-controlled, restraining himself to the point of frugality, never spending more than he possessed, and never trying to acquire more than he needed for living. Rembrandt was the opposite, enjoying his life with a wealthy wife and the possession of a house and of works of art. He always spent more than he had, acquiring more and more until he was bankrupt. Having nothing of the mathematician in him as Spinoza had, he never balanced his budget, he speculated, won and lost, borrowing from friends whom he could never repay. During the last fifteen years of his life his affairs were in a chaotic condition. He lived in constant turmoil, alternating between happiness and tragedy, public fame and retirement, his creations being the result of those emotional explosions which must have been followed by physical and spiritual depressions.

REMBRANDT *was a Christian: he believed in sin and in the love of a God who saved humanity by sacrificing his Son Jesus Christ. His life was a constant act of repentance, and a falling into irregularities which he regretted. He prayed to God for forgiveness and gave thanks when he felt he had been saved from temptation. His first famous painting was* "The Repentant Judas", *his last* "The Prodigal Son Praying for Forgiveness." *Spinoza's spiritual life was on an even level, that of a philosopher who practised the ethics he preached. He believed not in sin, but in destiny. Prayer was useless: we could and should love God, but this did not mean that He would love us, because the laws of nature could not be changed on account of the wishes of an individual. Spinoza's nature was a harmonious one, his only worry must have been whether his delicate constitution would permit him to finish the books he had planned. He had inherited tuberculosis and died at the age of forty-four. Apart from this his maxim was:*

"Not to spend one's life in sorrow and sighing, but in calmness, enjoyment and cheerfulness, thus constantly rising to higher spiritual levels."

Compared with Spinoza, Rembrandt was robust, a plebeian whose powers of resistance must have been almost without limit, to judge from the enormous number of works he completed, undoubtedly with great physical strain. If he did not live to be more than sixty-three, the reason was probably that he had over-worked himself.

THESE TWO GENIUSES *were therefore opposed in their philosophy of life. Every great epoch of civilisation produces two opposing philosophies which by their mutual opposition create immortal works of art. When two such geniuses belong to the same epoch, their conceptions must also show common traits. Spinoza and Rembrandt shared an intense devotion to ethical problems: Spinoza's* Ethics *are perhaps the most essential part of his system, and Rembrandt's ethical tendency, most touchingly expressed in the stories he tells and in the portraits he paints, is a fundamental element in his art.*

At another point also both men met on a higher level. For both, individuals were only a minute part of a superior power which governed their destiny. For both, the mystic and the pantheist, the return to a former cosmic existence was a necessity, although Spinoza's philosophy of pantheism ruled out the immortality of the individual.

W. R. Valentiner

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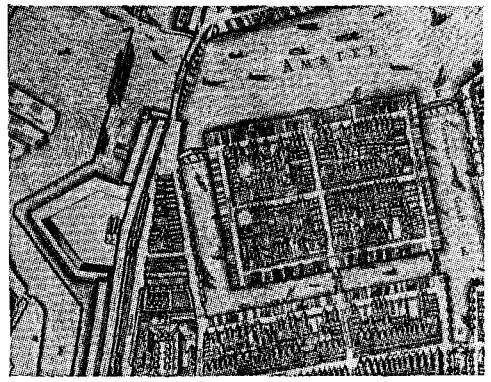
the attire of the Neapolitan fisherman and rebel Masaniello, in an open-necked shirt and with a fishing net.

There is no evidence that Rembrandt gave him drawing lessons, but it is by no means inconceivable that he should have done so. After all, they were neighbours in the Vloienburg quarter, which should not be thought of as a ghetto in the traditional sense. True, the Marranos who had come to Amsterdam from Spain by way of Portugal—the community to which Spinoza's family belonged—were conscious of their common origin and lived there in close proximity to each other; but they enjoyed full citizenship of the city of Amsterdam and their rights and duties were unrestricted. They were not marked off from their fellow-citizens, were not despised or avoided; and Rembrandt did nothing unusual or out of the way when he settled among the prosperous merchants and notable scholars of the community.

When Rembrandt moved into the Breestraat in 1639 he was thirty-six, was already famous, and had been married for five years to the wealthy Saskia Van Uijlenburg. His son Titus was born there two years later. The chief rabbi Manasseh ben Israel, Spinoza's teacher, with whom we know Rembrandt was well acquainted long before he moved here, lived in the house opposite. The street behind the Breestraat was the Houtgracht (now the Waterlooplein) and No 39 was the Portuguese Synagogue. The Spinoza family home was No 41; he was born there on 24 November 1632. The boy was seven years old in 1639, when Rembrandt moved into the Breestraat and the Jewish community built a new school house next to the synagogue. This was the Talmud school which Spinoza attended until his fifteenth year. At that time it had already been decided that he was not to be a merchant like his father and brother, but a scholar.



AMSTERDAM (*1625*)

REMBRANDT KNEW THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD like the back of his hand. Above all, he knew the old Jews with their lined faces marked by suffering which impressed him so deeply that he kept using them as models. To them we owe some of Rembrandt's most magnificent portraits. He went frequently, not only to the synagogue but also to the Talmud school, and his etchings and drawings show that he must often have sat there with his open sketch-book. One such sketch dating from 1648 was made at the time Spinoza was a pupil there. It is easy to imagine that the painter, sitting and sketching quietly in the corner while teaching was in progress, may have been struck by the young Spinoza, who stood out among his fellows by reason of his impressive intelligence and quickness of wit. Not unlike the young Jesus in the Temple, which is the subject of a number of Rembrandt's etchings and drawings, he astonished his teachers by his questions and arguments. It would, of course, be wrong to identify the boy in the pictures dating from 1652 and 1654 as the young Spinoza, who at that time had long since left the Talmud school (he attended until 1647–1648).

But even if Rembrandt did not pick out the boy Spinoza at synagogue or school, he very probably met him at the house of his teacher Manasseh ben Israel just across the road. Manasseh can be assumed to have been a friend of his for at least twenty years, for he made a portrait etching of him in 1636, three years before he moved to the Breestraat; and in 1654, two years before his bankruptcy, he illustrated *La Piedra Gloriosa*, one of the books Manasseh wrote in Spanish. Further evidence of Manasseh's link with Rembrandt's studio is the splendid portrait of him painted by Govaert Flinck in 1637; Flinck was Rembrandt's pupil from 1632–1636 and worked in his studio. When Rembrandt wanted advice for his numerous pictures (illustrating Old Testament incidents), he needed only to cross the street to consult the celebrated Jewish scholar.

Though only a miller's son, Rembrandt was by this time as well educated as the youthful Spinoza. At Leiden, where he was born, he attended the Latin school and after the age of thirteen the university; and apart from Latin he knew some Hebrew. Spinoza had a gift for languages that was extraordinary even for that polyglot age. In the years of his maturity he read, wrote, and spoke not only Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch, but also Latin and Greek, French, Italian, and German. Knowledge of Latin showed him the way from the dark Hebrew into his own bright world. Latin was not taught at the synagogue school—one of the reasons why he later used Latin for his first heretical writings was that his Talmud teachers could not read it—

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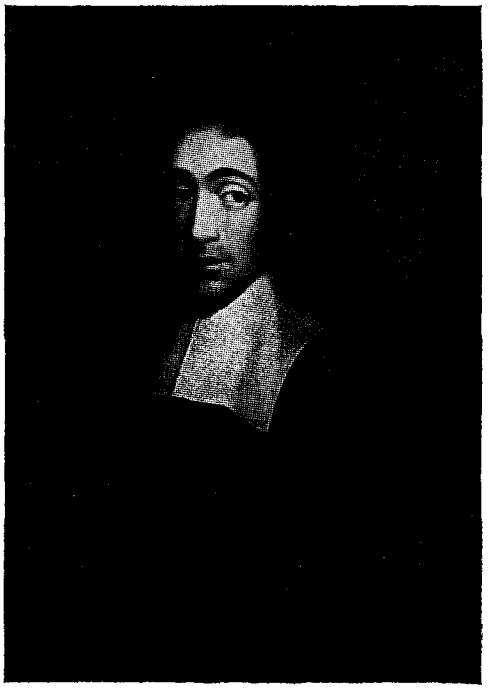
and the young Spinoza sought out his own Latin teachers. The first of these is said to have been a German student who taught him the basic elements. Then, for a more thorough grounding, he attended the well-known Latin school of Dr Frans Van Den Enden, who lived in the "artists' corner" at De Nes and took in boarders. He too knew Rembrandt well.

DR VAN DEN ENDEN was a remarkable man. By training a physician, he was also an art collector, antique dealer, and bookseller. As he did not do well at any of these, he also taught Latin; and he was such a successful teacher that the richest men in the city sent their sons to him. This was significant, as he was a well-known free thinker, completely alienated from the Calvinist Church in which he was brought up. He belonged to the circle of Amsterdam Collegiants and Mennonites, whose Bible study and other meetings were attended by Rembrandt and Spinoza. This many-sided and enterprising man ended up on the gallows in Paris in 1672, after being involved in a nobles' conspiracy. Spinoza was indebted to Van Den Enden not only for his excellent and elegant Latin but also for his knowledge of ancient authors and above all the works of Descartes, which promptly set him off on his own path.



PORTRAIT OF SPINOZA BY AN UNKNOWN ARTIST (*Wolfenbüttel*)

If it is correct that Spinoza was Dr Van Den Enden's pupil from 1647–1650, he must have met Rembrandt at the doctor's house, for a young consumptive pupil of Rembrandt's was living there at the time (he died there in 1649). This was the painter Leendert Van Beyeren, who made some excellent copies of Rembrandt's works and acted as a kind of factotum for the master. Rembrandt is believed also to have used him as a model; the delicate youth in the portrait etching of 1641, or the card-player of the same year, could be he. But Rembrandt certainly visited his sick pupil more than once at Dr Van Den Enden's house, and he surely saw Spinoza there.

We know that Spinoza made Van Den Enden's acquaintance at meetings of the Amsterdam Collegiants, where he was impressed by the doctor's free-thinking openness of mind and his incisive way of speaking. Many of Spinoza's best friends, both then and later, were included among these Bible students: Pieter Balling, Jarig Jelles (who financed the publication of Spinoza's posthumous works), and the Amsterdam publisher Jan Rieuwertz (who published Descartes and, later, also Spinoza). Some of Rembrandt's best friends were also Collegiants, and as both had close connections with the same circle it seems likely that another Collegiant, in addition to Van Den Enden, also belonged to it.

THIS WAS THE prosperous Amsterdam judge Coenraad Burgh, who in 1666 became Dutch Finance Minister. It was in his house at Oudekerke that Spinoza took refuge after his excommunication and remained for five years, until he moved in 1661 to the still more remote and isolated Collegiant community at Rhynsburg. Coenraad Burgh's wife was the daughter of the celebrated poet and historian Pieter Cornelisz Hooft; and his sister was married to the Dr Nicholaes Tulp whom we know from Rembrandt's famous painting *The Anatomy Class*. Tulp later inherited the house and called it "Tulpenburg", combining the names of the two owners. But he was not a friendly and helpful free-thinker like his brother-in-law Burgh who opened his house to anyone suffering harassment because of his religion. On the contrary, he was a reactionary figure who, when he became burgomaster of Amsterdam in 1659, zealously persecuted all non-Calvinists, particularly the Collegiants and Mennonites who believed in unfettered discussion of the Bible.

Rembrandt seems to have known the Burgh family for a long time. He is known to have stayed frequently at their country house, and he made a number of landscape sketches near it, including the *Six's Bridge* of 1645, which shows the view from the house. If his portrait of the unknown Jewish student, now at Cleveland, which certainly dates from 1658–1660, is in fact

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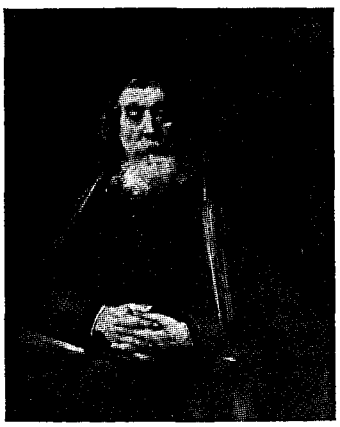
a portrait of the young Baruch Spinoza, it was painted at the Burgh country house at Oudekerke or in Rembrandt's studio on one of Spinoza's brief visits to the city.

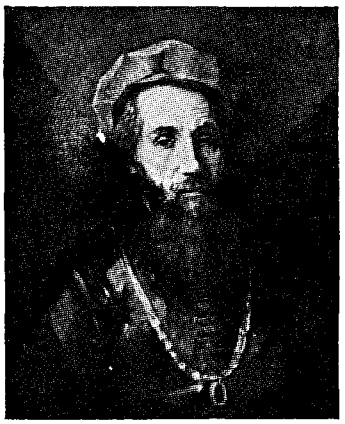
WHETHER IT IS A PORTRAIT OF Spinoza or not, it is in every respect exceptional in Rembrandt's work at that time. It is the portrait of a young Jew aged between twenty-six and twenty-eight—which was Spinoza's age—and Rembrandt had given up painting portraits of the young at that time. Also the technique is quite different from the free, broad technique he employed in the studies of sad-faced Jewish old men that he was using at the time for his religious and biblical paintings. It bears all the marks of a carefully constructed portrait of great truth to life.

It is an extraordinary picture, because of the subject's inner peace and self-assurance and extreme concentration of expression. The other-worldly young man of the fine, intelligent, Portuguese type is lost in thought, quiet, relaxed, entirely occupied with himself as he looks past the viewer; and we should not be led astray by the fact that he looks very different from the Spinoza in the well-known portrait painted by an unknown artist in about 1666. This is a smooth, conventional and thoroughly mediocre picture showing Spinoza at about the age of thirty-five, clean-shaven and in black bourgeois costume with a white collar. Rembrandt's young Jewish student, painted ten years earlier, is bearded, wears a fur hat and a rather worn fur-lined coat. We know that in his early years, when he was very poor, particularly after his excommunication, Spinoza did not wear the fashionable citizen's costume, but adhered to the hair-style and clothing of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam; a portrait by an unknown hand dating from 1660 (and of not quite certain authenticity) also shows him with a still sparse youthful beard.

There are many resemblances in the three portraits—the dark hair; the high, arched brows; the long, slightly hooked nose; the full lips; the high cheek-bones and the sallow or olive complexion—that struck many visitors, including Leibniz. But how much more life and depth there is in Rembrandt's portrait!

THAT IS, I am afraid, where we must leave the matter. We do not know for certain that Rembrandt and Spinoza, whose paths so often crossed, met and knew each other. We do not know whether Rembrandt really painted Spinoza's portrait. But there is nothing to prevent us from imagining that *Sternstunde* when Spinoza was seated in front of Rembrandt's easel, and the tremulous world of thought that his penetrating intellect conjured out of semi-darkness found its reflection on the canvas.





REMBRANDT: RABBI MONTEIRA (*Uffizi*); MANASSEH BEN ISRAEL; PORTRAIT OF A RABBI (*Zurich*)

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NOTES & TOPICS

Letter from Paris

Raymond Aron's "Vindication"

By Leopold Labedz

THE NEW BOOK by Raymond Aron, *Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente*,[1] was written as a tract for the forthcoming (March 1978) French elections. But it deals not just with the political issues and electoral risks; it provides a sharp focus on the general historical implications of current European weaknesses and confusions. The West Europeans, preoccupied as they are with the immediate home-front problems of their countries, seem unable or unwilling to recognise the dangers involved in the choices facing them at the moment, choices which might be decisive for liberal values in Western Europe.

In his defence of "our decadent Europe", Raymond Aron gives a magisterial analysis of the cultural, political and economic problems facing us in the fourth decade after the Second World War. He reflects on the historic tribulations of the Communist countries, on the present economic crisis in the West, on so-called North-South relations, on Soviet dissidence, and on the Euro-Communists. He draws lessons from 20th-century experience and presents his conclusions—Aron's own political *summa* of contemporary history—not just for France, but for the West as a whole.

The excerpts from the book in this issue of ENCOUNTER give an idea of its scope, its depth and its cool reasonableness, so characteristic of Aron's writings. In view of its exceptional intellectual interest and political topicality, this issue of ENCOUNTER is very largely devoted to it. Raymond Aron's position can be ignored by the West only at its peril.

[1] *Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente*. By RAYMOND ARON. Robert Laffont, F.49.00.

Plaidoyer pour l'Europe décadente can also be seen against the background of a particularly ironical juxtaposition. Aron writes that during the last French electoral campaign (in 1974) he was struck by the overwhelming support given by the French intelligentsia to the Socialist-Communist coalition. Paradoxically, although the French "progressive" intellectuals still support it, they are undergoing an ideological upheaval at the very moment when *l'Union de la Gauche* is poised to win the election under the banner of the *Programme Commun*. After decades of sophisticated self-deception about the harsh realities in Communist countries and of the double standards applied to them, the ritualistic passions, mental stereotypes, and cherished myths composing what Aron calls *le sinistrisme* (inadequately translated as "Leftism") have suddenly been challenged from within the *gauchist* milieu itself.

THE IDEOLOGICAL EARTHQUAKE started with Solzhenitsyn. He found defenders not only among the "visceral anti-Communists" but also among the old radical Left: the editor of the now defunct *Les Lettres Françaises*, the (then) Communist Pierre Daix; the editor of *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Jean Daniel; its regular contributor, Maurice Clavel; and many others.

Soon younger intellectuals from among the *contestataires* of May 1968 appeared on the scene. One of them, the ex-Maoist André Glucksmann, wrote a passionate defence of Solzhenitsyn in the press and then published an equally passionate *cri de coeur* about his disillusion in two books: *La Cuisinière et le Mangeur d'Hommes* (subtitled "Essay on the State, Marxism and the Concentration Camps"), and *Les Maîtres Penseurs* in which he rejected both Marxist theories and Communist practices.

After the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* a number of young French writers and philosophers suddenly discovered the problem of totalitarianism. The children of 1968 saw in Solzhenitsyn "the Shakespeare of our age." "Gulag" entered their vocabulary and the *Archipelago* texts, as François Bondy put it, "became their political Bible", replete with testaments of suffering and courage. They refused to see Stalin simply as an historical aberration, and began to search for the explanation of the totalitarian phenomenon in Marx's own ideas. Even the somewhat older philosopher, the former editor of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, Claude Lefort in *Un Homme Fort* (subtitled "Reflections on *The Gulag Archipelago*") subjected his own Marxist assumptions to a critical examination, and concluded that it was Marx himself who in a contradictory way was nevertheless the

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source of the totalitarian practices of his disciples as they become the masters of the state. Marcel Gauchet, in his essay "The Totalitarian Experience and Political Thought" (*Esprit*, July-August 1976), asserted that the common trait of both Fascist and Communist states is their claim of a total identification with society. Bernard-Henri Lévy made another dent in the Marxist domination of the post-War intellectual scene in France. He asked himself the puzzling question how it was possible for "scientific socialism" to permit the emergence of "Gulag" and for the "proletarian consciousness" embodied in the Communist Party to tolerate the tyranny of Stalin. In his painfully pessimistic book, Lévy criticised not just Marxism but also *le progressisme* and, in effect, French revolutionary rhetoric itself. He warned that the promises of *les lendemains qui chantent* made by the Left may lead, as they did elsewhere, to *l'univers concentrationnaire*.

THE NEW PHILOSOPHY, as this tendency was dubbed, has evoked an extraordinary response among Left intellectuals, including some of the most famous archetypal progressives. But it was subjected to bitter attacks from those among them who remained attached to their revolutionary utopias. They accused the young gurus (as *Le Nouvel Observateur* called the "New Philosophers") of having become "the tool of reaction" and of undermining the electoral chances of *l'Union de la Gauche*. They were even labelled "the New Right"—although they evidently derive from the radical mainstream of the French Left and still proclaim their attachment to it. We observe here an evolution not just of separate individuals, but of a whole milieu. Between 1966 and 1968 Bernard-Henri Lévy, Philippe Nemo, Christian Jambet, Guy Lardreau, Michel Guérin (and some other future New Philosophers) attended the seminars at the famous Louis-le-Grand *lycée*. They were influenced by Lacan and Althusser. Later, some of them collaborated with the Maoist and New Left journals (e.g., *La Cause du Peuple* and *l'Idiot International*).

The New Philosophers were censured by a number of critics. Maurice Duverger stressed their "confusion" (*Le Monde*, 10 June), which is true enough, but (as Raymond Aron emphasises) Duverger himself is far from being free from related ambiguities. It is also true that they have not originated any essentially new ideas. They began to elaborate certain old truths which had been expressed often before by successive European generations of disillusioned utopians and revolutionaries. But they have done so with authentic passion, and there was indeed an evident freshness in their rediscovery of liberty. Attacks on them were mainly concerned with their effect on the already crumbling myths of the "progressive" intelligentsia, on the fading hold of Marxism (once described by Sartre as "the unsurpassable philosophy of our time") in the present intellectual climate of France. They have changed it to a point where references to David Rousset (who even in the 1940s tried to convince the French Left intelligentsia that Stalinist forced labour camps *did* exist) and to Viktor Kravchenko (whose *I Chose Freedom* was the centrepiece in a famous Paris libel trial) are no longer taboo.

Raymond Aron's point in his latest book is very apposite:

> The essence of a certain *sinistrisme* is the systematic application of double standards. I happened to be listening to a Paris radio broadcast on the day when Andrei Sakharov was awarded the Nobel peace prize. "*Une petite bombe*", the journalist remarked in a superior tone, as if to remind his listeners that the physicist had played a big part in the manufacture of the H-bomb. Yes, this champion of human rights whom the Norwegian judges were honouring had indeed helped to perfect the thermonuclear missile. But when Robert Oppenheimer, who had been head of the Los Alamos team, was persecuted during the McCarthyite "witch-hunt" period, the intelligentsia throughout the world rushed to his defence. And what did the persecution consist of? He was denied access to US secret documents on the ground that he was a "security risk." But he retained the confidence of the trustees of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and remained Director of that prestigious institution.
>
> Sakharov has spent years struggling for the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union, a matter of concern to the whole of humanity, for which he has sacrificed his peace, his security, and his privileges. Why react with reserve, as if with embarrassment, to a tribute rendered to a hero of non-violent resistance? Andrei Sakharov, that anonymous Paris broadcaster said, often joined up with "the professionals of anti-Communism." Should we include among these "professionals" N. S. Khrushchev, who made the famous speech to the Twentieth Congress which has never been disavowed by those who attack "Cold War anti-Communists"? Shouldn't the real charge be that these "professionals" were for so long a time the only ones in the West or East to speak the truth?

THE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE of *le sinistrisme* soon got under way. Régis Debray—the pupil of Louis Althusser, the theoretician of the revolutionary *foco* in guerrilla warfare (*Revolution in the Revolution*), who moved from Che Guevara to François Mitterand by way of Salvador Allende—has violently castigated the New Philosophers for "mechanically identifying the Gulag with real socialism" ("Les Pleureuses du Printemps", *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 13 June). Others accused them of indulging in a "new obscurantism", of "*un travail de cochon*" (*cf.* François Aubral and

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Xavier Delcourt, *Contre La Nouvelle Philosophie*, Gallimard, 1977, and Gilles Deleuze in *Le Monde*, 19–20 June).

Replying to the critics, Jean-Marie Benoist defined the issue (in *Le Monde*, 3–4 July) as one in which what is at stake is the possibility that wherever the Communist Party came to power "Marxism would become a monopolistic state religion, barbaric and even more bloodthirsty than the Christianity of the Inquisition." Bernard-Henri Lévy was no less emphatic in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (27 June 1977):

> "When I published my *Barbarie à visage humain* a few weeks ago I did not anticipate that it would generate so much hatred and bad faith, so much meanness and stupidity. . . . I have never believed that I personally possess 'the truth' or even that I am 'in the right'; but, facing such a concert of accusations, I begin to ask myself whether I have not touched some very sensitive point. Which one? . . . Some of us think that to 'resist' today means to dare to say 'no' to the murderous visions of the omniscient savants who claim to know the way to happiness. Today some of us realise that such false claims in politics frequently end in a blood-bath, though unfortunately the blood spilled is always that of others."

In his editorial in the same journal, Jean Daniel formulated the thought in a less abstract form:

> "The belief in Marxist prophecy remains intact in the French Communist Party, and it could produce a totalitarian trend. . . ."

THE CURRENT GREAT DEBATE on the French Left indicates that some of its members have got cold feet at the prospect of *la Gauche* coming to power in a coalition which includes the Communists. They have evidently had second thoughts about what the victory of *l'Union de la Gauche* in its present form may imply in its eventual outcome. It has also been a remarkable indication that Raymond Aron has been right all along—ever since he formulated his critique of Marxism and of the French "progressives" more than a quarter-of-a-century ago! Some of them are only now recovering from the mental effects of being for so long addicted to "the opium of the intellectuals."

Their extraordinary twists and turns are a matter of record. Sartre is no longer saying that one must not reveal the truth about Stalin's camps for fear of depriving the French workers of socialist hopes: "*Il ne faut pas désespérer Billancourt.*" He now appeals for the support of the Polish workers and Soviet dissidents. One remembers how he once reproached Albert Camus for his criticism of the Soviet concentration camps:[2] "Like you, I find them inadmissible,

[2] On Sartre, Solzhenitsyn, and the political record, see ENCOUNTER (July 1975), p. 94.

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but I also find inadmissible the usage which is daily made of them by the bourgeois press. . . ."

But although Sartre has never admitted that he was demonstrably wrong in the past (and because of this Solzhenitsyn refused to meet him in Moscow), he is now publicly associating with people whom not so long ago he would have dismissed as "vulgar anti-Communists."[3] While Brezhnev dined with Giscard d'Estaing at the Elysée palace on 21 June 1977, Sartre attended the solidarity meeting at the Théâtre Récamier alongside Soviet dissidents, among them Maximov, Bukovsky, Amalrik, Sinyavsky, and other such "anti-Soviet elements" (*e.g.* Eugène Ionesco) with whom in the past Sartre would not have been seen dead, much less called them by the honourable name of *résistants*! Not difficult to imagine what his old critic and erstwhile friend, Raymond Aron (whom Simone de Beauvoir had caricatured in *Les Mandarins*), must have thought about it. . . .

IS IT EVER ANY GOOD being prematurely right? Doesn't it always result in even greater animus from those who were wrong and prefer never to be reminded of it? But despite such embarrassments and inhibitions of the non-expiatory progressives, the emergence of the New Philosophers has been called "Aron's Vindication" (by Alain Gerard Slama in *Il Giornale*, 23 June). The "liberal" Communist historian Jean Elleinstein sensed it when he reproached the New Philosophers in *Le Monde* (27 May 1977):

> "With André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Lévy we are already at the entrance to the universe of Raymond Aron, of his analysis of *une Europe décadente* which, we believe, only socialism will regenerate. . . ."

Among the French Communists, Jean Elleinstein is the most explicit critic of Stalinist crimes. Aron, who preceded Elleinstein in his basic (but much more thorough and consistent) diagnosis by some 25 years, now warns his compatriots ("*Etrange nation! La plus intelligente ou la plus déraisonnable du monde*") not to believe that what resulted in degeneration in the East could ever bring regeneration in the West. In his concern with "decadent" Europe, Raymond Aron prefers to trust historical experience rather than Euro-Communist "dialectics of history." One can only hope that his French compatriots will heed his council. That also goes for the other Europeans—and indeed for the Americans too.

[3] Perhaps to compensate for this, Sartre indulges in new political fantasies by protesting against repression . . . in Italy. His "Appeal" has been roundly derided by the Italians from Right to Left.

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BOOKS & WRITERS

The Unassertive Innocent

Furbank's Forster—By HILARY SPURLING

"WE HAVE RATHER A LIFE of it if we do anything baby doesn't like", wrote E. M. Forster's mother when her son was three. A snapshot shows him at the age of five reclining gracefully on her arm, a self-possessed and faintly mocking infant in ringlets, velvet frock and lace pantalettes. In another, taken six or seven years later, he is a dejected, gangling, crop-haired schoolboy with tense wrists and shoulders already defensively hunched. Before and After pictures of this sort are common enough in the career of any boy at English public school, but for Forster the contrast seems to have supplied a specially sharp, perhaps a permanent pattern in his life. School meant for him not only the usual tensions, constraints and emotional ferment, but also his first taste of masculine society. Until he was 11 he had spent a radiantly happy childhood almost exclusively in the company of capable, cultivated, independent and more or less doting women, at least one of whom was prevented from living with him only because of inability to keep her idolatry in check.

Forster was the second and only surviving child (the first died at birth) of a short but extremely successful marriage. His father developed a cough soon after Morgan was born and, almost before his young wife understood what was happening, died of consumption leaving her to devote the rest of her life to a baby not yet two. The pair seem to have established relations on more or less equal terms from the start. In point of charm, humour, resourcefulness and mutual appreciation of one another's wit, Morgan and his mother were well matched. When she explained to him that boys can't marry their mothers, he sensibly resolved never to attend any weddings for fear of finding himself married by mistake to somebody else. She called him "Poppy" and employed a series of gardener's boys to play with him. Otherwise he distributed his favours between the maids ("Tiresome to be interrupted in my reading when the light is so good" he said to one, when he was four) and a circle of honorary or actual aunts with names like Weenie, Emmie, Enty and Monie (his great-aunt, Marianne Thornton, who left him the £8,000 which became, as he said, his "financial salvation" for life). No wonder if these early years left him, as P. N. Furbank points out,[1] virtually imprisoned in his habit of "playing the bright little girl to his mother":

> "You will want to hear an account of the dinner party. I wore all my best things, including those you put ready, and looked very nice indeed—probably I was remarked on, though I did not hear it. We were ten in all . . . . I was the only child, so I felt proud . . . ."

This letter was written from King's College, Cambridge, when Forster was 20, and its sedate, half-flirtatious self-depreciation nicely conveys the tone he took with himself well into adult life. Long before he left King's he had accepted, indeed promoted, his friends' view of him as something of a mollycoddle and muff, engaging, ineffectual, capable of no more serious occupation than occasional articles, the odd post as tutor and companion, part-time lectures to Working Men (or WMs as he called them). He travelled abroad with his mother before settling with her in South Kensington and later in Weybridge; and he practised a private cult of the Demeter of Cnidus in the British Museum who represented for him a benevolent mother deity, and perhaps also "the reconciliation of male and female in his own nature."

THIS IS ONE of the very few surmises which P. N. Furbank permits himself in the course of an admirably vivid and full but strictly factual biography, and one can't help wishing he had chosen to develop it further. For the portrait he paints of Forster in his twenties and thirties has all the characteristics of a type always with us but perhaps especially familiar in Forster's generation: the patient, resigned, somewhat plaintive but generally dutiful daughter at home, tending an increasingly difficult mother ("My life's work, if I have any", he noted gloomily in 1911) and wistfully watching the great world pass by beyond the windows. He played the piano most days, wrote, read, took walks and made only

[1] *E. M. Forster: A Life. Volume One: The Growth of the Novelist 1879–1914.* By P. N. FURBANK. Secker & Warburg, £6.50.

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the dimmest impression on the neighbours. Fits of rage or despondency visited him from time to time: thrown among spinsters in foreign pensions, he registered a private protest by sticking up a postcard frieze of male nudes in his bedroom. Exasperated by his mother's petulance at home, he pictured himself smashing all her china on the mantelpiece and dashing out to slit his throat. But the study of maiden ladies was his speciality, as it was Mr Beebe's in *A Room with a View*, and, like Mr Beebe, he had arranged a daily round that "provided ample opportunities for the work."

He must also have found, as so many lady novelists have done down the ages, that the pose of insignificance and unassertiveness afforded a convenient front, under cover of which he might write unmolested and without any of his intimates taking him seriously. When a Cambridge friend in the Indian Civil Service praised *A Room with a View*,[2] Forster replied disarmingly that the letter made him specially proud, "for it *is* gratifying when those who know the world and men at work can find a book by me not sloppy nor unconnected with life. . . ."

Meekness of this order possesses the dual advantage of flattering the recipient and at the same time giving nothing away; but the habit of concealment also has drawbacks, in Forster's case severe ones. It accounts for the vein of facetiousness freely acknowledged by himself in his early work, and also for a deeper disingenuousness perhaps only fully and finally exorcised in *A Passage to India*; and here again one wishes that Furbank had adopted a laxer definition of biography, one which would have allowed him to subject Forster's writings to the kind of intense and rigorous scrutiny so brilliantly brought to bear in his earlier book on Samuel Butler. *The Growth of the Novelist* sticks instead to what one might call the anecdotal aspects of the novels, the circumstances of their writing, the models available, the comments of critics and friends, the author's own cryptic or occasionally revealing reactions on publication. But Forster's life (like Butler's) is peculiarly and inextricably entangled with his work: conflicts unresolved in the one produce such persistent and glaring flaws in the other that one could hardly ask for a more striking illustration of his own most celebrated tag: "Only connect. . . ."

Perhaps the most obvious example centres round that notion of masculine friendship as the sole source of intellectual and emotional gratification which was prevalent—indeed almost mandatory—at King's at the turn of the century and wholeheartedly endorsed by Forster, who saw in it a handy means whereby "human affection need not be confined to the home circle or extended to the harem": neither of them tempting options to one who, like Mr Beebe, "was from rather profound reasons somewhat chilly in his attitude to the other sex." The result, in so far as Forster's early novels are concerned, is a notably ambivalent idealisation of his heroes and the correspondingly recriminatory note apparent in a long line of unappealing characters like Agnes Pembroke or Mrs Failing.

The same insincerity lies behind the rather startling naivety of, say, the views on love, marriage and parenthood canvassed in *A Room with a View* by old Mr Emerson and echoed with approval by Emerson's creator; or the scene in *The Longest Journey* where Rickie lectures his half-brother on keeping out of the pub, a passage which might have been transferred wholesale from a contemporary boys' school story:

> "There is also a thing called Morality. You may learn in the Bible, and also from the Greeks, that your body is a temple. . . . If your body escapes you in one thing, why not in more? A man will have other temptations."
>
> "You mean women," said Stephen quietly, pausing for a moment in his game. "But that's absolutely different. That would be harming someone else."
>
> "Is that the only thing that keeps you straight?"
>
> "What else should?" And he looked not into Rickie, but past him, with the wondering eyes of a child.

THESE ARE ONLY TWO among any number of episodes which amply confirm Forster's own admission, set down three years after *A Room with a View* was published, that he suffered from "Weariness of the only subject that I both can and may treat—the love of men for women and vice versa." The triteness of the widower Emerson's advice about marriage ("It isn't possible to love and part. . . . I know by experience that the poets are right: love is eternal") is painfully clear if one sets it beside, for instance, the subtle and truthful treatment of Dr Aziz' love for his own dead wife in *A Passage to India* sixteen years later. As for Rickie and Stephen, their entire intercourse exemplifies Forster's reluctance to explore relationships between young men: he is no more willing to analyse why it is that Rickie twice faints dead away on learning the truth of Stephen's parentage than he was earlier prepared to confront the actual source of Rickie's excitement over the soldier, Gerald Dawes—"a young man who had the figure of a Greek athlete and the face of an English one. . . . Just where he began to be beautiful the clothes started."

This is a characteristically engaging example of

[2] *A Room with a View. The Lucy Novels: Early Sketches for A Room with a View.* By E. M. FORSTER. Edited by OLIVER STALLYBRASS. Edward Arnold, £7.95, £12.50.

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what Professor A. O. J. Cockshut, in a recent brief survey of the sexual theme in Forster's novels, calls "the enthusiastic and appraising eye of the homosexual"; and one would have liked to know a great deal more about this roving eye, and its distorting effect on Forster's work. Furbank has no use for speculations of this sort, though his urbane and dispassionate treatment of his subject's love life makes it increasingly hard for the reader to ignore the question as to what it was that made Forster, in book after book, unable to steer clear of a topic whose implications he was so clearly unable to face. Of course he hardly could have dealt openly with homosexuality in a book intended for publication before the First World War; and in any case he feared to shock his mother (whose susceptibilities had been sufficiently offended by the seduction of Helen in *Howard's End*). But there seems to have been more to it than that. For one thing, when he wanted to and without causing offence, Forster was perfectly capable of creating actual or incipient homosexuals (Mr Beebe is a prime example, and so is Cecil Vyse in the same book) of a solidity and crankiness fit to set beside his splendid line in maiden ladies. For another, the one novel in which he did treat the forbidden subject fully and frankly, *Maurice* itself, is by no means free of the confusions, half-truths and adolescent fantasies which seem to have bedevilled Forster whenever he set foot on this ground.

In this connection, it is perhaps worth remembering a suggestive incident which took place soon after Forster left King's, when Maynard Keynes insisted on circulating an exceedingly coarse explanation, supplied by one of the lewder Cambridge aesthetes, of the submerged sensuality in "Story of a Panic": Forster was outraged ("He had had no thought of sex for his characters—sex simply hadn't been in his mind at all"), and it was only years later that he brought himself to admit that there might be something to be said for an interpretation of which he had been wholly unaware at the time.

CERTAINLY EXTREME INNOCENCE and ignorance seem to have marked physical relations with his friends at Cambridge and, so far as one can make out, further forays in later life were also largely inconclusive. His first great love was for a brilliant fellow undergraduate, H. O. Meredith, with whom he probably enjoyed a fair amount of arm-pinching and hair-rumpling (and possibly a single, more explicit encounter long afterwards to which he attached no great importance); his second was a far more relaxed affair with the expansive, mercurial and captivating Indian, Syed Ross Masood, who from time to time went

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so far as to pick Forster up bodily and tickle him. Otherwise conscientious lecturing at the Working Men's College in London apparently produced no individual acquaintances (a fact which perhaps explains the singularly wooden WMs in his books—one thinks of the clerks, Leonard Bast and George Emerson, as well as of Maurice's beloved, the gamekeeper Scudder); and diary entries suggest that Forster had resigned himself to enforced celibacy. He read *A Shropshire Lad* with shocks of recognition and relief, and, at the age of 28, shyly surmised that Housman too must have loved a man. Six years later he received the momentous revelation—when Edward Carpenter's assistant pinched his bottom in passing—which led directly to the writing of *Maurice* (completed 1914, first published in 1971).

Here, freed for the first time from the boredom of "the love of men for women and vice versa", he could write without distortion or concealment. There is something indisputably and touchingly authentic about Maurice's gaucheries—as when, for instance, he learns (from the character modelled on Lytton Strachey) of Tchaikovsky's homosexuality, and rushes out to buy a biography: "The episode of the composer's marriage conveyed little to the general reader . . . but it thrilled Maurice." By the same token, one would guess that Maurice's hopeless attempt to get help from a rabidly conventional doctor—a monstrous and marvellously comic scene—sprang from experience, but that the physical climax in bed with Scudder did not. Indeed their two nights together are quite as unconvincing as the various heterosexual embraces which fluster people so dreadfully in Forster's earlier novels; and, with the book's final resolution, we enter realms of purest pie in the sky as Maurice vows to live happily ever after "outside class, without relations or money", but with England herself on his side—not to mention "her air and sky" as well as "the forests and the night"—in a fight to the death against conventional sexual morality. After that one is scarcely surprised to learn that *Maurice* was written from little or no experience of what Forster generally calls "the carnal."

FURBANK'S BIOGRAPHY leaves him at this point, on the outbreak of the first war (when it strikes one as altogether characteristic that, acting on a keen sense of national doom, Forster took his first regular job as a part time cataloguer at the National Gallery); and one eagerly looks forward to learning from his second volume what it was in the next decade which enabled Forster to move on from the patchiness and frequent immaturities of his first five novels to the consummate mastery of *A Passage to India*. In the meantime one may

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grumble at the discreet omissions of a biographer who declines to come to grips with what is surely the single most crucial issue in his subject's life and work. But, though it may be tempting, it is perhaps after all churlish to complain when *The Growth of the Novelist* takes its tone—humorous, appreciative, detached, companionable above all—from Forster himself at his most charming.

Inside the Bubble

Re-reading Tom Wolfe—*By* CHRISTOPHER BOOKER

I VIVIDLY RECALL my first encounter with the writings of Tom Wolfe. It was in 1965, the year when that curious mania known as the "Swinging Sixties" was at its height. I was deeply puzzled by this outbreak of cultural hysteria which seemed to be engulfing the Western world—the insane fashion-consciousness, the demand for bright colours and loud rhythmic noise, the worship of certain key figures, "dream heroes", whose role was to provide imagery for the collective dream-state: pop singers, pop artists, photographers, model girls, dress designers. And not the least extraordinary thing about it seemed to be the extent to which almost everyone (in the media at least) seemed to be quite bewitched by what was happening. There seemed to be no one standing outside the bubble, and observing just how odd and shallow and egocentric and even rather horrible it all was!

Then one day there fell into my hands a new book from America called *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (1965), by a young journalist then in his mid-thirties (Tom Wolfe was born in 1931). From the moment I opened it, I was transfixed. Here at last seemed the very man I had been waiting for—the detached observer who not only saw that something very odd indeed was happening to the Western world, but had also (quite a problem!) discovered the right style in which to write about it.

In his introduction, Tom Wolfe described how it happened. He had been sent out to California by *Esquire* to write an article on the "custom car cult"—the backyard craze for building automobiles shaped like alligators and fish and heaven-knows what, in extraordinary designs and colours. He had come back to New York, tried to describe this strange, surreal little world in his usual condescending "totem prose"—and found it simply could not be done! Eventually *Esquire*, with "a two-page wide colour picture for the story locked into the presses", told him in desperation just to type up his notes and send them over for someone else to write the article. Wolfe sat down that evening at 8 p.m., turned up the rock 'n' roll on the radio, and tried to put down every scrap of an impression he could recall, in a kind of stream of consciousness. Forget about main verbs . . . finishing sentences . . . if you're still groping for a word, just . . . leave dots! By 6.15 next morning he had written 49 pages—and *Esquire* ran the story exactly as he had put it down.

Over the next 18 months, in 1963 and 1964, Wolfe used the same vivid, breathless, epithet-drunk prose style to describe Billy the K., the disc jockey who became known as the "Fifth Beatle", and Cassius Clay and Las Vegas (the "new-style-town" *par excellence*) and Baby Jane Holzer, the "girl of the year", who mixed with the Stones and Hockney and all those incredible new pop swingers from Britain ("They're all young and they're taking over, it's like a whole revolution, I mean it's exciting, they're all from the lower classes, East End sort of thing"). And at last there it all was on the page—the whole frenetic, nervous, crazy, egocentric, self-destructive, nightmarish *danse macabre* of the "New Culture"! The "Swinging Sixties" to the life!

BUT THEN CAME THE nagging question. For all his extraordinary perception and ruthless eye for the sham and the egocentricity and the nightmarishness—to what extent *was* Wolfe actually "outside" what he was writing about? How *deeply* did he see—or was he still really inside the bubble, just another brilliantly gifted part of the charade he dissected so mercilessly? Did it matter?

Three years later, when his second collection of essays was published (in this country as *The Mid-Atlantic Man*), the questions still nagged. The book contained some of the most ruthless profiles Wolfe has ever written, such as that of Bob and Spike Scull, a couple of new-rich New York socialites who had made it big in the Sixties "art scene" on money from his cab fleet. This culminated in a party of truly Inferno-esque quality out at Flushing, for Jasper Johns and Rauschenburg and "Poonsy" and "Andy" and everyone, the climax of which was a Warhol-type film showing the view from underside up into a lavatory pan, with a huge turd crashing in full

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colour into the audience's faces. There was an almost equally horrible portrait of Hugh Hefner, the pasty-faced Masturbation King, sitting at the heart of his horrible Chicago mansion on an enormous round bed, surrounded not so much by beautiful girls as by just a mass of dials and video screens and electronic equipment, so that he can watch himself on the Ampex while the bed turns . . . and turns . . . and turns. There was a poignant description of Carol Doda, the San Francisco stripper, who had become the city's biggest tourist attraction by blowing up her breasts with silicone to grotesque size, until . . . well, what would happen when the thrill and the silicone wore off, and poor Carol was alone with her withered balloons and no one to treat her even as human any more?

BUT FOR ALL HIS apparent searchlight eye for the grotesque fantasies by which people seek to make themselves rich and famous and popular and special (until one day they wake up and find themselves miserably alone), Wolfe did not bother to hide his admiration for some of the values and heroes of the strange "New Culture" he was charting. He seemed to have an obsession, for instance, with physical description, and in particular with the difference between glorious, energetic, sexy youth ("beautiful little high-school buds in their buttocks-decolletage stretch pants") and the hideous deformations of advancing age ("old veiny white ankles, which lead up like a senile cone to a fudge of tallowy, edematous flesh"). Perhaps still more revealing was the essay on Marshall McLuhan which, while appearing to portray him as a kind of wonderful, absurd confidence trickster, could never actually bring itself to the point of denying that perhaps McLuhan was right! Perhaps, after all, he *was* the sage who, alone, had grasped the impenetrable truth about this strange madness which had seized the post-TV, Sixties world.

About the time *The Mid-Atlantic Man* (USA, The Pump House Gang) was published, Wolfe wrote what is probably still his most famous essay, "Radical Chic"—the horrific snapshot of a party given by the Leonard Bernsteins for a mixture of the New York smart-set and the leaders of the "Black Panther" movement, which more than anything else captured that insane blur in late-Sixties America between violence and glamour. In 1975 came that brilliant long article (or short book) *The Painted Word*, showing how the whole crazy fantasy-edifice of the New York "modern art world" ultimately rests just on two or three critics, whose word alone decides whether a pile of garbage poured on the floor is just a pile of garbage, or the most wonderful new

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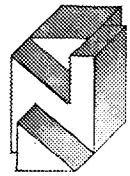

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art sensation, worth twenty thousand dollars. And now we have Wolfe's first collection for seven years, *Mauve Gloves and Madmen, Clutter and Vine*.[1]

AT FIRST SIGHT IT SEEMS to be much the mixture as before, although with rather more fiction and less straight reportage. The title story gets inside the mind of a successful Jewish writer who has become so carried away by all the externals of his new role as a successful writer—the Lobb shoes (to think, his father had come over from Russia with nothing!), the Martha's Vineyard beach house, the smart literary party in their Manhattan apartment, with flowers by "Mauve Gloves" and catering by "Madmen, Clutter and Vine"—that he has virtually forgotten how to be a writer. There is another story about a black baseball player who is conned into making a dreadful TV commercial for after-shave. There are one or two rather jaded little essays on "the pornography of violence" and the survival in America of give-away upper- and lower-class accents ("Honks and Wonks"). And by far the best piece of reporting in the book has nothing to do with the fashionable world at all, but is a portrait of American pilots flying off carriers into North Viet Nam ("The Truest Sport: Jousting With Sam and Charlie"). This completely dispels (certainly as far as I was concerned) any view that those fliers were safely cocooned in a kind of air-conditioned, electronic bubble, murdering in comfort by remote control. Thanks to the unprecedented concentration of flak and super-sophisticated SAM missiles which were thrown up against them whenever they stuck a nose in off the Gulf of Tonkin, their survival rate compared unfavourably with almost anything in World War II.

The longest essay in the book, called "The Me Decade: The Third Great Awakening" (already published over here in *Harper's-Queen*) begins with a description of a girl at a "let-it-all-hang-out" therapy session in the Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles. Everyone has to shout out the thing which deep down most worries them about themselves, and in her case it is . . . haemorrhoids. From here the essay modulates somewhat improbably into an analysis of the great "religious revival" which has overtaken America in the past ten years, from Hare Krishna and LSD to "born-again" Jimmy Carter. Wolfe compares this ("the third great awakening") with the previous explosions of popular religious fervour in the 1740s (Wesley-ism) and 1825-50 (Camp meetings and Mormonism). And his thesis is that at the

[1] *Mauve Gloves and Madmen, Clutter and Vine*. By TOM WOLFE. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $8.95, £3.50.

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heart of this religious revival lies an obsession with "Me"—that the ultimate fruit of post-war money and prosperity is that everyone has been liberated to concentrate on themselves. So recklessly does he mix up soul and body, religion and sex, that almost any movement which has caught on in America in the past decade can be seen as essentially just part of the same mish-mash of egocentricity.

NOW THIS IS PERHAPS an arguable, interesting thesis—although the case would have to be put with a great deal more psychological and historical rigour than Wolfe brings to bear. As it stands, it is just a long, confused, breathless attempt to jumble together by sleight-of-hand anything from "group-sex", Germaine Greer, "honesty sessions" and *Suck* to Gnosticism, Methodism and Zen. In fact one feels that the pages of *Harper's-Queen* were exactly the right place for it. But in the end this essay brings us back to the question—just where does Tom Wolfe stand, and how serious is he?

Because there is no doubt that he sets out to be something much more ambitious than just a casual observer of the passing show. He is an analyst, a deep thinker, a man who can use words like *kairos* and *antanacasis*, consider the nature of ecstasy, talk about Zoroastrianism. He asks to be taken very seriously indeed—so let us try.

IT WAS EXTREMELY revealing that the one intellectual charlatan against whom Tom Wolfe was reluctant to pronounce *anathema* was Marshall McLuhan. For the point about McLuhan is that once upon a time he was an ordinary dull little Conservative Catholic intellectual, influenced by Chesterton, hating the modern world, and hankering for the lost paradise of a pre-industrial, agrarian society. Then one magic day, some 30 years ago, he read Poe's story "The Maelstrom", about the sailor who, caught in the notorious whirlpool, realises that the only way to escape is not to fight the downward pull of the vortex, but to leap out of his ship and float—like the surrounding driftwood—UPWARDS, to safety! The lesson was not lost on the Canadian professor. He decided that no longer would he fight the whirlpool of modern culture—he would float with it. Instead of castigating the mindless stream of imagery of television or pop music, he would bless it. He would acclaim everything—"the medium is the massage"—he would float with the random—sensation flow of "post-linear", "post-verbal" culture—and everything

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would be O.K! Thus, telling people what they wanted to hear in the crazy late-Sixties, did McLuhan win his brief reputation as the prophet of the age.

The parallel to Wolfe himself is inescapable. If you go back to the introduction to *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (1965), the nearest thing to an explicit credo he has ever written, his moment of "literary conversion" was when he realised that the only way to write about the pure sensation flow of Sixties culture was to create a prose-style which exactly matched it. And deep down, of course, Wolfe made no secret of the fact that, far from dismissing "the New Culture", he was in fact celebrating what he called:

> the new sensibility—*Baby baby baby where did our love go?*—the new world, submerged so long, invisible and now arising, slippy, shiny, electric—Super Scuba-man!—out of the vinyl deeps.

In a revealing passage in that introduction, Wolfe for the first time gave his "explanation" of why all these strange cultural phenomena had emerged in the Western world in the 1950s and '60s:

> The war created money. It made massive infusions of money into every level of society. Suddenly classes of people whose styles of life had been practically invisible had the money to build monuments to their own styles. Among teenagers this took the form of custom cars, the twist, the jerk, the monkey, the shake, rock music generally, stretch pants, decal eyes—and all these things, these teenage styles of life, like Inigo Jones's classicism, have started having an influence on the whole country.

Like *what*? like *Inigo Jones's classicism*? What on earth is the guy talking about? It is part of Wolfe's sleight-of-hand technique to rush the reader along at such a breathtaking pace that one does not always notice the "serious analysis" (usually by sweeping analogy) that he is trying to slip in along the way—and when it comes to deeper psychological or historical or sociological explanations, he certainly (like McLuhan) tries to pull some very fast ones.

Wolfe's basic thesis here (so often repeated since) is simply that money creates the opportunity for self-expression, and always has done—and that *all forms of expression are the same.* Take this sentence (from the title essay of *The Kandy-Kolored etc.*:

> I don't mind observing that it is this same combination—money plus slavish devotion to form—that accounts for Versailles or St Mark's Square.

Well, I suppose one can see what he is driving at—but if one is prepared to rest on the simple equation of any form of artistic or fashionable expression with any other, St Mark's Square

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with the "custom car" or "the shake" or "decal eyes", then one is not running very deep in terms of analysis! Why not include Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes, or Mozart's Requiem or Chartres Cathedral for good measure? The Rolling Stones equals Leonardo da Vinci. *Q.E.D.*! Indeed, whenever Wolfe ventures into these sweeping historical parallels (as in "The Me Decade"—John Wesley equals Germaine Greer) he is soon treading on very thin ice indeed, simply in terms of his own ignorance:

> I don't have to dwell on the point that cars mean more to these kids than architecture did in Europe's great formal century, say, 1750 to 1850 [*sic*!]. They are freedom, style, sex, power, motion, colour—everything is right there!

It would be hard to conceive of a more utterly meaningless (and in the widest sense illiterate) string of words—and there in a nutshell is the very worst of Tom Wolfe.

OF COURSE THERE IS much more to Wolfe than that. His real achievement (apart from providing a great deal of journalistic entertainment) has been to capture in words, and from the inside, some of the more bizarre cultural inanities of one of the most insane and fascinating decades in the history of the world—probably with greater skill and insight than anyone else writing in the same period. He has been able to see through "radical chic" and Hugh Hefner and the nonsense of the New York art world like nobody's business. But in the end, outside the world of the wonderful, exploding, self-expressing ego—however nightmarish and self-destructive and horrible that world can be—what is left? So let's just flow with it, baby! Wolfe's is a pretty bleak, harsh, loveless view of the world. He is like a man sitting on a fairground roundabout, feeling desperately sick, but seeing no way to jump off. Or like a soul doomed to wander for eternity through a particularly nasty modern version of Dante's Inferno, without the faintest hope of escaping into Purgatory, let alone Paradise. In the end, after re-reading his collected works, I am afraid I just feel slightly sick myself. I don't think I shall want to read any more.

Durrell—on a Tourist Bus?

By Jan Morris

"YOU MUST BELIEVE IN God, my child", said Jowett to Margot Asquith, "whatever the clergymen say." I feel rather the same about the Novel, whatever the critics tell me, but I do have doubts about the travel book. How thin these days, the Travel and Topography section of the book catalogues! How ineffably dated already those multitudinous travellers' tales which crowded the bookshops of the 1950s and '60s, like the doctrinal treatises and sermon collections of another age! Is there any point in describing travel, when everybody travels? Does any Armchair Traveller need sustenance now? Is the *genre* doomed?

It depends, of course, on what you mean by travel writing. There are writers like Ibn Batuta, A. W. Kinglake, or Robert Byron, whose theme really is the journey itself, through countries unfamiliar to the generality, in circumstances wonderful and bizarre. But there are writers like Lawrence Sterne, too, to whom the journey is simply a medium on which to hang an anthology of messages; or like George Borrow, whose books are less narratives of travel than peripatetic lectures; or Lawrence Durrell, whose works on Corfu, Rhodes and Cyprus are experiences not of motion but of contemplation, evoking less the passing scene than the timeless spirit of place.

Durrell especially, in our time, has restored to topographical writing some of the lyric mystery, the sense of profound participation that the Romantic poets brought to the appreciation of landscape: all the odder then, all the sadder perhaps, to discover that his new island book[1] concerns itself, first to last, with a standard package tourist excursion, seven nights' hotels included, in a little red bus with box lunches—an hour for a cathedral, rather more for a classical site, and a doze on the back seat in between.

IT IS ABOUT Sicily. Mr Durrell had never been there before, and he compounded his inexperience by plumping for this mini-bus circuit of the island, arranged by his travel agent in Nîmes, as a means of writing a Sicilian Book. This was certainly frank. Mr Durrell apparently knew little about Sicily when he started, and not very much more when he left. How could he? Like

[1] *Sicilian Carousel*. By LAWRENCE DURRELL. Faber & Faber, £5.25.

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every other package tourist he is chugged from site to site, hotel to hotel, in a dispiriting whirl of sight-seeing, fatigue, picnic food, midday wine, badinage, petty squabble, administrative mishap and cultural overkill. As he goes along he reads his guide books, and masticates their contents skilfully, supplementing it with his own fancies and with informative letters from an imaginary (and dead) correspondent named Martine (he burns them on page 215, when they have lost their usefulness). Proceeding thus, he produces a beguiling enough travel-sketch which embraces most of Sicily's classical sites, but entirely misses —ignores indeed—the brooding inner presence of the island itself.

This is the queerest reversal of talent, for the glory of Mr Durrell's earlier island books was their haunting suggestion of membership. They were wonderfully *knowing*. With their misty evocations of scenes and characters, their half-veiled memories and sometimes unexplained allusions, they gave one the feeling that their author was integral to the landscape itself, as natural a part of the place as the lizards or the olive groves. So in fact he was. He is truly Mediterranean man, having lived most of his life on the shores of the inland sea, and in those former island memoirs he bottled its essence with an exquisite expertise.

But in *Sicilian Carousel* he is the tyro, and the role does not suit him. There is a moment in the book when, overhearing his party described as "poor tourist scum", he feels actually ashamed of himself for being on the Carousel (for such was the ineffable name of the tour). I felt ashamed for him too. He is too good a writer, too good a traveller, for this kind of merry-go-round. We do not want to see Lawrence Durrell traipsing up to the night's hotel with the rest of the exhausted Carousellers: we want to eavesdrop upon him sitting among the lemon-trees on his own terrace above the sea, discussing philosophy and the meaning of words with ancient beloved sages and nubile friends.

A little forlornly the book tries to match those former seductions. Fabers have produced it with their familiar somewhat inconsequential charm—pretty flowered chapter headings—a clutch of unattributed old prints—a grammatical misconstruction in the blurb—a list of previous works that includes four of Mr Durrell's earlier books, title by title, *twice*. There is a nice hint of old fragrances to the design of the volume, its handsome print and its generosity of white, as though it ought actually to be scented with jasmine or mimosa from the south.

Sometimes the text, too, blossoms. Six gentle poems are alleged to have been inspired by Sicily, and lovely turns of phrase still turn up. A

Johns Hopkins

AMERICA'S MASS MEDIA MERCHANTS

William H. Read

In a book packed with provocative ideas, a seasoned newsman charts the rise of the American mass media and examines the implications of their global penetration. The fact that American mass media have established themselves as strong currents in the global transfer of information and entertainment is beyond dispute. What the man in the street in Bogota or Bangkok learns about world news probably came from them. William H. Read documents in detail the transnational development of the Associated Press and United Press International, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post-Los Angeles Times* news services, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Reader's Digest*. He describes their day-to-day operations, the principles guiding their editorial selection and coverage, and their financing and management.

At the time of its origin UNESCO was devoted to the idea of facilitating the free flow of information across borders. In the last few years, however, it has increasingly talked about the need to defend minorities against cultural swamping. Faced with the realities of direct satellite broadcasting, the United Nations had expressed similar qualms in its debates. While sensitive to fears of "cultural imperialism", Read finds *information sovereignty* to be an unacceptable alternative to the *free flow* principle. His lively argumentative book is the first contribution to the dialogue from a liberal, critical, but not antimedia, stance.

209 pages, £8.20

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS
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French family on the tour look "like very cheap microscopes." Syracuse spreads across its countryside "in a smeary way." The white cusps of cyclamen push through the soil "like the ears of some fabulous story-book creature." This is the real thing, the touch of Durrell for which he will, in my opinion, always be remembered.

Would that it were all so. But *Sicilian Carousel* is a tired successor to so many pleasures. The great god Pan, it seems, has momentarily deserted Mr Durrell, and his pagan exuberance is muted. Even his elegance flags—"It didn't ought to be a great work of art but it was" is scarcely vintage Durrell—while the celebrated similes sometimes have an anxious air.

Is the long exile beginning to tell? Certainly the moments of English nostalgia are poignantly dated. London barmaids, I fear, no longer say "Lord luv yer now", still less as a general rule wear Horrocks cottons on holiday. The Eighth Army, the county cricket scores in *The Times*, a Waugh-like schoolmaster on the run, a comic Anglican Bishop, a jolly nice ex-Indian Army colonel—these extras and incidentals of the *mise-en-scène* ring a little melancholy, I think, like stanzas rescued from an old typescript, and dusted down to fit a more contemporary composition.

WHY? WELL PARTLY, I suspect, because Mr Durrell enjoyed neither making the journey nor writing the book. The first was a misjudgment gamely endured (besides, the Americans wanted some magazine articles), the second a telling example, it seems to me, of enthusiasm congealing into duty. When Mr Durrell finished *this* one, I would bet my last advance, he opened a bottle of his delectable local muscat in sheer relief (even the Sicilian wine had been pretty awful). Every writer makes a mistake sometimes, and this was one of his.

Then there is the subject. Mr Durrell is a Hellenist, and in his previous Mediterranean writings, Corfu to Alexandria, he has been pursuing his own ideals of, or tastes in, Greekness. He tried to do the same in Sicily, and often succeeded, he assures us, in recapturing the authentic Attic tang, the wistful melody of grove or ruin, that has so long enthralled him. But Sicilian Greekness is, like it or not, residual. It may be, as Mr Durrell says, that there are pockets of Greek-speaking Sicilians still, but their culture has long been overwhelmed by waves of Romanness, Arabness, Normanness, Spanishness, and Italianity. Far more pungent than the Greekness of Sicily is its own mongrel ambiance of power, intrigue, complexity and decay; but into these matters, by the nature of commercial tourism, the little red bus did not poke its bonnet.

Finally, it is a failure of form. As a travel book, it does not work. Mr Durrell needs time, affection, silence and long discourse to distil his magic. He needs to stand and stare. What possessed him to suppose that he could honour his art from the seat of a tourist bus on a week's tour of the antiquities? He remains, even on the evidence of this frail piece, one of the most delightful writers alive: so if, like me, you are saddened by *Sicilian Carousel*, don't blame the author—blame the *genre*.

The Avenue at Middelharnis, By Hobbema

Regard the perspective, the teacher said.
He was a man of precision, and in
his subject, mathematics, I bled
from incomprehension, frustrated chalk.
So—regard—the proper Word,
and my imagination walked
the long straight road in the Netherland sun.

He said it was flat; I knew it was flat.
The magic was in the maths and when
the road drew me into infinity, that
might have been my Damascus. He
taught me relevance, and I sat
in his class and learned nothing else—but have seen
worlds beyond Middelharnis since then.

Joan Downar

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EAST & WEST

Letter from India

J.P.'s Testament

By M. R. Masani

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN has now become one of the best publicised and most written-about Indians of the day. His prison diary has been published in book form, and every morning the newspaper reader in India is told of the state of his health. Quite rightly, he is given a greater share of the credit for the end of Mrs Indira Gandhi's authoritarian régime in March 1977 than any other individual. Millions in India pray for his good health as they believe he alone can keep the country and its new Government on the straight and narrow path of adherence to the values which he embodies.

And yet, not long ago, this was not so. From the time of his release from solitary confinement in November 1975 till the end of 1976, JP was a man most people feared to visit and the censored Indian Press dared not quote. His isolation from his friends abroad and the people of India was nearly complete even after his solitary detention had ended.

There is a dramatic incident, the story of which can now be told, regarding JP in the dark days of December 1975 when he was still fighting desperately for his life. It has remained known only to him and two or three of his intimates, and it recaptures the climate of those days.

I VISITED JP in the Post-Graduate Institute of Medicine in Chandigarh immediately after the news of his release on 13 November, and I returned to Bombay ahead of him to await his arrival in Jaslok Hospital for treatment.

When JP entered Jaslok Hospital on 22 November, he did so as a dying man. His kidneys, it was discovered, had practically stopped functioning altogether, and his condition was precarious. I called to see him next morning, 23 November, and made the following entry (which I reproduce from the "Emergency Diary" I had been keeping from 26 June 1975):

> "I may be wrong but I definitely have the feeling that he was a much weaker and frailer man than he was when I had seen him a few days earlier in Chandigarh. That, I suppose, is the contribution of the Prime Minister's Secretariat in delaying him in Delhi.
>
> "When I was chatting with JP, Dr Shantilal Mehta, the head of Jaslok Hospital, turned up. He told JP that he and I had been in school together. He mentioned that he had already been attacked by the *Janmabhoomi* newspaper for not having issued a health bulletin about JP at the Government's insistence. Dr Shantilal was quite justifiably angry at this slur. When he asked JP what he should do, JP said he would leave things in the doctor's hands. When Dr Shantilal turned to me inquiringly, I suggested he might put out a tentative and not very communicative bulletin saying it would take a few days for JP's kidneys to be investigated and only then could any form of prognosis or diagnosis be made, but that JP's life was not in danger. To my surprise Dr Shantilal said that he was not in a position to say that JP's life was not in danger. I must confess I thought it was an unusual remark to make in the presence of the patient. It was obviously intended to make JP realise his condition. But Dr Shantilal did agree to my suggestion that he could tell the press that there was no *immediate* threat to his life and that they would put JP on an artificial kidney the next day...."

The next two weeks were anxious ones. Despite the dedicated attention of an entire battery of doctors, there did not appear to be much progress worth recording.

THE ANXIETY JP's friends experienced was heightened in my own mind by an awful thought. Suppose JP were suddenly to collapse, what was there to stop the Prime Minister and her colleagues rushing down to Bombay, becoming the principal mourners at the funeral, and claiming that JP had realised his errors and that he had intended to give the régime in Delhi his cooperation?

This was, let me hasten to say, not the result of a fevered imagination. That was what had in fact already happened to Mr Kamraj Nadar a couple of months earlier when he had passed away without leaving any written evidence of his attitude to public affairs.

Quite apart from the macabre nature of such a development, what bothered me was the way in which this could endanger JP's reputation for posterity and in history, and mar an entire lifetime's devoted service to human freedom.

After two or three days of perplexity, I decided to take JP into my confidence. On the morning of 4 December I ventured to share my fears with him, and suggested he put a few lines on paper in order to guard against his being misrepresented in case the worst were to happen. To my relief, JP nodded and said it was a sensible idea. He

MINOO MASANI'S *account of the career of Jayaprakash Narayan was published in* ENCOUNTER, *December 1975, with a postscript in January 1976.*

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then went on to ask if I would prepare a draft for him. JP's habit of asking me to draft statements and resolutions for him was one I had known from the 1930s when we were co-secretaries of the Congress Socialist Party. I had—earlier that morning, rather anticipating such a request—prepared a short draft of what I imagined JP would like to say. So I produced it from my pocket. "Just like you", quipped JP happily. I asked him how he found the draft, and he said it was fine. When I asked if he would sign it right then as a "holding operation" until we could get the document better authenticated, JP did so but only after making a change which showed that he was by no means signing without applying his mind to it.

I did not then tell JP that I had decided we should move rather fast because that afternoon JP was going in for a biopsy of his kidneys; according to some, kidney biopsy could be fatal by giving a shock to the kidneys. Mercifully, though the biopsy was not a success, JP came out of it uninjured.

It was necessary that JP's political testament should be as properly attested and authenticated in order to withstand any challenge as would an ordinary Will made by any patient in hospital. I took the problem to my eminent lawyer friend, Soli Sorabjee, now Additional Solicitor-General to the Government of India. Soli was distinguishing himself by his advocacy of Editors, including myself, who were then refusing to bow to the whims of Mrs Gandhi's press censors. He promised to bring a Notary Public with him to JP's bedside.

On Friday, 5 December, at the appointed hour of 6.30 p.m., Soli Sorabjee turned up with a Notary Public, his clerk, his register and his seal, and we went though the formal signing and notarising of JP's political testament which read:

> "Today is the 5th of December 1975 and I am undergoing treatment at the Jaslok Hospital in Bombay for my kidneys which have been very badly damaged during the 4½ months of solitary confinement in detention from which I have just emerged.
>
> "Just in case I am removed from the scene, I would like to state for the information of my friends in India and abroad and the Indian people in general that my views about the situation in India are precisely what they were on 25th June 1975 and when I wrote to the Prime Minister in July 1975. Indeed all the ugly things that have happened since have only confirmed my apprehensions. I am making this clear just in case there should be any attempt to misrepresent the position when I am no longer there to correct any such misstatements. I hope the people of India will be able before long to liberate themselves non-violently from the present tyranny."

WHEN I ARRIVED home I wrote in my diary: "I sincerely hope we won't have to use this document and that JP will be able to speak for himself in the coming months and years."

Such was the grim atmosphere and sense of insecurity in which we then functioned that we arranged for photostats of the Testament to be got out of the country to the *Times* and *Telegraph* in London and suitable confidantes in New York, to be used only in the event that it became necessary to do so.

Fortunately, there was no occasion for the Testament to be used; and from January 1977 onwards when freedom of association and of the Press was restored, JP was able to give his call for liberation to the people of India from the platform and through the Press.

Recently, I read his Testament of 5 December, 1975, back to JP and told him I thought it should now be published. He agreed. The document is now only of historical value; but it bears evidence to the unswerving determination and tenacity with which JP adhered to his objectives even when he was at the lowest ebb of his physical resources.

Red Indian Corpse

Deer-of-the-Waters: he laboured hard on his grammar
And learnt to say John Doe; his coat of arms of a deer
Went back to the Stone Age: the family mark,
The dodaim or totem which was his true father
And everyone's true father, since the pregnant women
Fed on venison, and this built his body; the red flesh
Of all his ancestors was this same totem venison.
Then they did the Italian Pope Trick on him:
Confessed him, shot him, and because his personal name
Had never been written, called him after the totem: Doe
Typed on a tag-label tied to his left big toe.

Peter Redgrove

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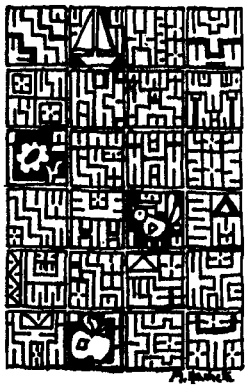
PRESS

Last Chance for British Newspapers

Has Fleet Street a Future?—By NORA BELOFF



BRITISH NEWSPAPERS jointly own their two major news agencies: the Press Association and Reuters. If we want a plural and diversified press, they will have to learn to share their instruments of production.

The Royal Commission on the Press has just predicted that unless Fleet Street introduces "root and branch reforms" in the way they produce their products, many newspapers will close. But it takes a highly pessimistic view about the industry's capacity to change. It speaks of the "suicidal behaviour" of the print unions, but concludes that nothing can be done about it. This gloom is certainly justified if most national newspapers go on, as at present, expending their energy and money trying to demolish their rivals—and so putting themselves at the mercy of any small group of employees strategically placed to prevent their particular paper from coming out. The Royal Commission lists among the special features of the national newspaper industry the fact that on the frequent occasions when a small group of dissatisfied or militant workers halts production, all the other workers have to be paid their full earnings—normally at least three times as high as the nationally negotiated wages.

Yet despite their hostility to each other, the newspaper proprietors see nothing odd about sharing their news services, even though different newspapers obviously use their news-tickers in wholly different ways. No paper, however eager to encourage its own reporters and foreign correspondents, would be able to dispense with the national and international network of agency messages. Basic coverage of world news would be crushingly expensive and no single enterprise could afford it. Until now, however, anyone wishing to publish a newspaper (or group of papers) had to provide the plant. A revolution in the system of conveying news has made this obsolete.

IN THE 16TH CENTURY, the human effort required for disseminating words was suddenly geometrically reduced when Caxton introduced the printing press. And in 1884 the invention of the linotype machine by Ottmar Mergenthaler along with other printing developments enabled newspapers to publish millions of copies.

According to Lord Barnetson, chairman of United Newspapers, the new electronic methods of communication and publishing represent a leap of similar proportions. The relevance of this new technology to the plight of Britain's newspapers was examined for the Royal Commission by Rex Winsbury (of the *Financial Times*). By drastically reducing the costs of production, he reported, the new methods "offer to British society at least the hope of preserving and perhaps even enlarging what many other countries have either lost or never had—a varied and powerful national press to complement the financially more viable regional and local press of this country."

Winsbury travelled extensively in the United States and described the differences between the old system and the new. The linotype machine on which British national newspapers are still published is a large, clumsy looking typesetting contraption, with mechanical arms, cases of matrices (moulds), and a keyboard. When the operator hits the key, a matrix for the corresponding letter ejects from the case and falls into place. The operator inserts spaces so that the type reaches the end of the line, using a hyphen if the words do not fit. He then releases a line of type by pushing a lever that causes hot molten lead to be injected into the matrices. The columns of type are afterwards fitted into a frame and provide a reverse version of the newspaper page as it will come off the press.

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The page mould is curved, dried, and formed into a semi-cylindrical plate, weighing about 40 pounds, which is then mounted on the presses. A continuous roll of paper is fed through the press and is printed directly with the plate. The newspapers roll off the press to be stacked, bundled, and loaded into delivery trucks for distribution.

The main feature of the new system is "cold type"—the name given to it because the print images are generated photographically on the paper and there is therefore no need for molten lead. The economic advantages have been demonstrated by the speed with which the Americans have abandoned the old linotype machine. (They have not only stopped making new machines; they have sold off the old ones for scrap.)

The new photocomposition system depends on the introduction of computers which now play the central role at every level of production. The initial copy is either produced on special typewriters or on video display screens, and then sent into the computer which prepared the copy for the photocomposition machine. Reporters can carry portable video screens hardly heavier than typewriters, so that the words which the boxing correspondent taps out from the ringside can be those which will appear in the paper.

NOT ALL GOOD WRITERS are necessarily perfect typists: some will still need to dictate their copy. But the copy will still go straight from the newsroom to the press, with no need for resetting by another fallible pair of hands. Peter Preston, now the editor of *The Guardian*, was astonished when in 1974, as a production man, he saw the new technology being employed by the *Detroit News*, which has almost double *The Guardian's* circulation. After describing the automatic processes, he concluded: "The legions of linotypes have died at a stroke."

Advertising departments use the same techniques. Telephone girls who sell space for classified ads tap these straight into the computer which codifies and arranges them. Computers can be programmed to delete material sent in by firms on the "non-creditworthy" list.

In some new plants there is still a manually performed make-up job. A man with scissors and paste assembles the printed columns along with photos and ads to fill in his page. More modern machines print ready-made pages with the assembling done by the editor before the material comes out of the computer.

Instead of the molten lead, the new plates are composed of relatively soft photosensitive plastic.

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Parts of these are hardened by exposure; the soft stuff is then washed away in a tub, thus producing a raised printing surface. The plastic plate is flexible and can be bent to fit the cylinder of the printing press.

Other new plants dispense with the old presses altogether. The plates are made for a "web offset" press, using negatives on a flat surface. These work on the principle of creating areas on the plate which either attract or repel the printing ink. Until quite recently this method was only suitable for small runs. More recent research has refined the system, which can now be used by any mass-circulation newspaper.

THE NEW COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY applies not only to editing and printing papers but to almost all the traditionally manual tasks: sorting out the pages, tying up the bundles, dispatching packages to their appropriate destinations. The fully automated plant of the *New York Times* produces and distributes more pages per week than all the British daily newspapers put together.

THE BRITISH PRESS can learn a lot from the American experience (as well as from their mistakes—including the shoddy appearance of the newspapers during the experimental period). But the problem here is not how to improve methods of production (Fleet Street already has an enormous surplus printing capacity) but how to exploit the new methods to reduce over-manning and to restore managerial control. In Britain, the Royal Commission tells us, the trade unions and their local "chapels" have taken control of the tasks which in other industries are performed by management, "notably recruitment management and discipline of labour." In the US, as Rex Winsbury says, the new technology "has enabled managements to reassert that managerial control over the plant in terms of recruitment, manning standards and choice of equipment, which it had previously lost to the tightly organised craft unions. . . ."

But we have to remember that the American publishers who achieved this feat had done so only after they had established a monopoly in their area of production: they dealt with their unions after they had knocked their competitors out of business. Their success enabled them to corner local advertising and become rich and powerful enough to survive strikes and compel the unions to accept redundancies. The struggles were often long and bitter, but no major newspaper went out of business.

New York was an exception. There had been eight dailies, but two morning papers still survive. The *New York Times* and the *Daily News* have little in common—but before introducing the new technology, they got together, set up joint training centres for non-union workers, taught them to use the photosetting equipment, and arranged dummy runs to make sure that whatever the unions did, their papers would still appear. Both papers conceded ten-year guarantees against compulsory redundancies and, in return, get what they and British managements both need: freedom to introduce new technologies and to determine their own staff level.

UNLESS BRITISH PUBLISHERS COMBINE they cannot hope to achieve similar results. If they want to retain the individual character of their newspaper they will have to agree to share their production processes and confront the unions together.

Sharing computers is, of course, nothing new in British business. Many firms require access to computers they cannot afford to own but from which they simply hire a service. The case of the newspapers is exceptional, as it is difficult to see how press freedom could be protected if the instruments of production fell under the control of a single company or a single union. Further, as the Royal Commission observed, it would be politically undesirable to have the production facilities under the control of the Government or of a Public Authority which the Government appointed.

A *user's cooperative* would, therefore, be the only possible form of ownership of the joint printing plant. Many of the up-to-date gadgets would still have to be in the possession of the separate newspapers (*e.g.* video screens). But the minicomputers are relatively cheap: they would feed into a complex of large computers, which would have to be equipped to provide for the hugely different services that a newspaper industry which includes *The Sun* and the *Financial Times* must require.

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Access would have to be open to any person or group which could afford to pay. Production costs would still be high. Newsprint (the paper on which the news is printed) is expensive and no machinery can replace the best professional talents for which the papers would be competing. But production costs would be drastically reduced and as the papers would then rely less on advertising revenues, less newsprint would be required.

In present conditions, as Fred Hirsch wrote in his recent book *Newspaper Money*, papers that want to pay their way must either address themselves to the big spenders who attract high-priced advertisements or seek a multi-million circulation. If technical innovations slashed production costs, British readers would enjoy a far more varied choice of newspaper

THE PROPRIETORS are already beginning to see the advantage of sharing the new technology. In Manchester *The Guardian* and *The Mail* are printed on the same premises: *The Guardian* sends its ready-made facsimile pages from its London office. The interim report of the Royal Commission revealed that there had been secret meetings in 1974 and 1975 between *The Times*, the *Financial Times*, the *Telegraph*, and *The Guardian* to discuss a scheme "whereby all four Houses would print on the same presses and would share the latest computing technology." The Commission adds that no agreement was reached and that all parties have now announced their separate plans.

The papers themselves never disclosed the meetings or why they failed. The initiative came from *The Times*, which was installing new presses and dreaded taking on the trade unions alone. The Thomson group are now producing some of their magazines by the new methods, but their two major papers (*The Times* and *Sunday Times*) are still overmanned and running at a loss. Gordon Brunton, the Company Chairman, recently warned: "It is not possible for Lord Thomson and his family permanently to keep alive newspapers which are not making profits. There is no doubt that with the introduction of the new technology, *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* can withstand the harshest blizzards; without it, they cannot. . . ."

The Times brought along no blueprints and there seems to have been some confusion about what they were suggesting. The *Financial Times* has the impression that the discussions referred only to the introduction of new technology, and they never seriously contemplated sharing presses. The *Telegraph* was highly suspicious of being crushed in the embrace of the much more

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powerful Thomson Organisation. *The Guardian*, a much smaller and more vulnerable enterprise, wanted to make its own deal with the unions.

After the breakdown, the *Financial Times* proceeded to plan for full scale automation of its own premises. Last summer it drew back and worked on a more modest scheme for a pilot plant to deal with some of its pages. Then in July 1977, without even consulting the staff which had been engaged in preparing the new techniques, the managements announced that all changes were indefinitely postponed.

There is now reason to believe that at least some of the "quality" papers are again engaged in secret negotiations behind union backs. But meanwhile the internecine war goes on, and produces some ludicrous anomalies and extravagances. Some papers have reached the point where the more copies they sell the more they lose: but they cannot bring themselves to renounce the battle for circulation. Advertising departments of some of the popular papers are so intent on doing down their rivals that they offer cut rates which are insufficient even to cover the cost of the additional newsprint and production.

THE CIRCULATION WAR is just as implacable among the "qualities." It now seems that, except in times of boom, the "up-market" advertising from which they receive most of their revenues is insufficient to finance more than two serious Sunday papers. *The Observer* seemed particularly vulnerable ever since, three years ago, *The Times*, with which they had shared premises and presses, moved to Gray's Inn Road. *The Observer* had hoped to produce the news sections of the paper on the presses of the *Financial Times* and the rest on available plant in the North of England. As labour is cheaper outside London the unions objected and the petrified management, terrified of stoppages, agreed instead to run for their once-a-week publication a plant which had been built and staffed for a seven-day week.

By the time Robert Anderson of Atlantic-Richfield Oil bailed it out, *The Observer* had only half the circulation of the *Sunday Times* and was trailing 150,000 behind the *Sunday Telegraph*. The British management, arguing that the new American proprietor could hardly be expected to go on supporting a loss-making enterprise (expected to cost him about a million-and-a-half pounds this year), launched a massive promotion campaign designed to enable *The Observer* to replace the *Sunday Telegraph* as second-in-line. This has produced a curious paradox. If the American rescue operation succeeds, Anderson will have saved a vaguely left-wing and neutralistic *Observer* and demolished the far more pro-American and pro-capitalist *Sunday Telegraph*.

In his recent book *The Fleet Street Disaster: A Study in Mismanagement*, Graham Cleverley shows how the unions have successfully exploited the rivalries and cut-throat competition between newspaper publishers. These are normally push-overs: they would concede anything rather than risk a strike which might throw their readers into the arms of the Fleet Street enemy. Cleverley cites examples of a number of devices which the printing unions employ to increase their earnings (compositors earn three, four and sometimes five times as much as the official wage rate) and to reduce their work load. A brief glossary gives the general idea:

The blow system: rest time, which is often as much as one hour out of three. This does not mean that the men remain idle; only that during their nominal rest period they have to be paid overtime rates.

Ghost working: when the unions exact payments for "ghost workers" who, because of new machines or new methods, are no longer needed. The Father of the Chapel (the newspaper industry's name for shop stewards) shares out the money between the flesh-and-blood men.

Double working. Some chapels limit their week's rota to four shifts. One employer signs them on for social security and they work at other

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times as "casuals" on overtime rates. Managers turn a blind eye to the common practice among printers of defrauding the Inland Revenue by using false names when they register as "casuals" and collect the extra money.

Fat. This is the money shared by the compositors for the copy which they do not set. This material arrives from the advertisers in ready-made plates. The union insists the men should be paid as if they had set it.

Even the best-managed newspapers admit they are not allowed to know what goes on in their own premises. One senior manager told me that, in the plate processing room, the company have to employ a foreman from one union and, under his supervision, another eight from another union, each doing different jobs. Most of the tasks are relatively simple and, if the union rules permitted, could be interchangeable. Work studies are forbidden, but the management are privately convinced that none of the eight works more than a few hours a day.

THE PROSPECTS of most national newspapers are bleak, and the Royal Commission has so warned. Even *The Guardian*, which is exceptionally well-managed and has introduced as much modern technology as the unions will permit, only survives because it happens to be in partnership with the profitable *Manchester Evening News*.

Some managers have tried to persuade the unions that unless costs can be reduced their firms will close. Here the American rescue of *The Observer* has had unfortunate side-effects. Several executives have told me that operatives now retort that there will always be some oil billionaire secretly longing to acquire an English paper.

A CONCERTED EFFORT to introduce the new technology by agreement collapsed last May. A "programme for action" was painfully negotiated between the managers and the union leaders, in which the firms promised there would be no compulsory redundancies and offered generous terms to men willing to go. In return, the union leaders agreed that when disputes could not be resolved by arbitration there would be a 28-day notice before a strike. The men rejected the compromise.

The Royal Commission declared itself "saddened" by the news. Why should they have been surprised? Would we ever have moved into the motor-car age if it had depended on a free and secret ballot of coachmen?

If the country wants to maintain and extend an adequately representative press, the change will have to come with or without trade union consent. And if the government wishes to preserve the existing newspapers and encourage new ones, the state may have to share the heavy costs of paying off men whose skills are no longer required. This was indeed the only form of subsidy which the Royal Commission felt would be compatible with an independent press—although they said that, as the unions did not approve, the offer would have to be withdrawn.

THE CONCEPT of jointly-owned production facilities should recommend itself to both major parties: to the Tories who favour a wider spread of private enterprise and to Labour which suffers most from the present state of affairs in which ownership of newspapers is largely the preserve of eccentric Tory tycoons. And co-ownership has always recommended itself to the Liberals.

Neither of the major political parties would dare take on the whole trade-union movement, but the printing unions are a small and highly privileged minority, many earning over £12,000 a year, and the big battalions are unlikely to come to their defence. A senior employee of the National Press Association (NPA) with wide experience of other industries reckons that printers earn three to four times as much as men in other sectors who have equivalent levels of technical skill. It is known around Fleet Street

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that during recent talks on the new technology, members of NATSOPA (a hold-all union which includes chartered accountants, salesmen, secretaries, and messengers) whispered to managers that if the NGA and SLADE (the craft unions) were "difficult", they would be quite happy to help out. They knew it was the craft unions who debarred them from promotion to the better jobs and who grab the lion's share of the industry's wage bill.

To be economically viable and politically neutral the jointly-owned production plant bringing out Britain's national newspapers would have to be free from strikes. One characteristic of the new technology, as Winsbury pointed out, is that it blurs the distinction between professional and operative, in other words between white- and blue-collar workers. The employees, in return for giving up industrial action as a means of settling disputes, should be offered fringe benefits normally reserved for executives. These should include subsidised housing and transport (to premises preferably outside London), private pensions, holiday and health schemes, and support for their children's education. These costs shared between the newspapers would be very much less onerous than the sums paid out by each to buy off strikes. For as the Royal Commission pointed out: "In the last generation, print workers taught themselves the disastrous lesson that to ask and to threaten was to receive. . . ."

The recruits for the new plant would have to be vetted to exclude potential trouble-makers and would work under contract. There would be the appropriate safeguards against unfair dismissal—but also the corollary: recognition of fair dismissal for incompetence, inadaptability, laziness, or refusal to carry out contractual obligations. It is 23 years since a *Daily Mirror* manager dismissed an operative in the machine room for "gross insubordination." His mates insisted on his reinstatement, and "gross insubordination" has become a sport which many printers positively enjoy.

Even with public money, the transfer from the old system to the new will be painful. Some surmise that the police might have to be called in to protect the collectively owned plant from sabotage and to restrain certain enraged militants and their "flying pickets" from harassing its employees or their families.

IT COULD BE ARGUED that the British are so supine that they would resign themselves to the disappearance of a plural press, rather than risk the miseries of industrial turbulence. But though it may be too risky to take on the miners, there is not much danger in confronting the 13,000 men who produce the national newspapers—and of whom less than half belong to the specially privileged craft unions. Should this little band be allowed to prevent a country of fifty-five million from reaping the benefits of a lower-priced and more varied press, now made possible by the new technology?

The way things are going the British national press seems to have reached a cross-roads and will have to choose one of two ways: either the American system of jumbo monopolies, in which the surviving newspaper depends for its existence on monopolising the ads—or else a communist-style state control. In view of the obviously unacceptable nature of a privately-owned newspaper monopoly, the first would almost certainly open the way to the second.

But there should be no cause for defeatism. We now know how to produce a variety of independent newspapers cheaply and well. Once that objective is agreed, all that is needed is the will. Nothing less than a free press, reflecting a wide variety of news and views, is at stake.

After Mass

It's Sunday and the country boys have come
To woo from a distance. Intent, they loiter;
One has re-oiled his bicycle, another
Washed his underpants in the Slane river.

The bridge she sits on is of crumbling stone
And slopes in the water. Swinging her legs
She seems indifferent; intent is all they manage.
Fixed where they are they nudge and scratch and mutter:

"The thatch is on, the tenant should be in."

Frank Ormsby

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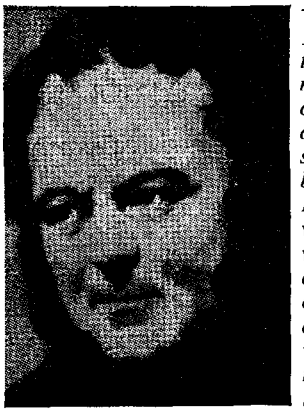
Stendhal's Scribblings

Milan



IN THE MAGNIFICENT *setting of the Palazzo Sormani, the city library of Milan, something of a literary sensation is waiting to burst upon the world. It consists of the 955 volumes of the private library of the one-time French consul at Civitavecchia, Henri Beyle, who became one of the greatest novelists of the 19th century under the* nom de plume *of Stendhal.*

He ill-treated 700 of these books in a way that was calculated to make any book-lover's hair stand on end but made them a treasure beyond price; for he used his own books and those of other writers as notebooks, diaries, and expense accounts. Before having his paper-backed books bound he had blank pages inserted to make more room for his scribblings. When he was not writing books he was always writing in *books whatever came into his head: biographical or travel notes, ideas, observations about art as well as such pedestrian matters as appointments and sums.*

His barbarous "book-keeping" ensured the survival of his library. After his sudden death in Paris in 1842 his executor Donato Bucci, his friend and hunting companion at Civitavecchia while he was consul there, tried to sell the books, but because of their "vandalised" condition failed to find a buyer.

THEY REMAINED GATHERING DUST *in possession of the Bucci family until 1924, when interest in the forgotten library revived. First the French state and then the city of Grenoble, Stendhal's birthplace, tried in vain to secure them. Meanwhile they had changed hands several times, and their last owner, the Banca Commerciale d'Italia, finally made them over to the city of Milan. This made symbolic sense, even though it distressed the French; for Henri Beyle alias Stendhal was so fond of Milan that he felt himself to be one of its citizens, as is shown by the Italian inscription he wrote for his own tombstone in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. "Henri Beyle, a Milanese, wrote, lived, loved."*

Henri Beyle, milanese, scrisse, visse, amò.

Gian Franco Grecchi, the curator of this diary in several hundred volumes, has been living with it and deciphering it for eight years now. The task is as difficult as it is fascinating, for Stendhal's jottings are almost illegible, on top of which cryptograms add to the obscurity. Some riddles, such as the dating, are easy to solve. Thus 1810 plus five times four is 1830; also the code names for persons and places, such as "1000 an" *for Milan, are easy to decipher. Much greater problems are presented by the self-invented lettering, the words borrowed from different languages, the continually changing handwriting (which is astonishingly reminiscent of the* parole in libertà *of Marinetti and his Futurist contemporaries).*

Not until the cataloguing and deciphering of the Bucci collection has been completed will its significance for the study of Stendhal be fully revealed. But a brief glimpse such as so far only few have been granted enables one to foresee that quite a literary gold-mine is going to be uncovered.

Even the choice of books that Stendhal took with him on all his travels, including the Napoleonic campaigns in Italy and Russia, is revealing. It divulges his predilection for Voltaire and also for Shakespeare, new editions of whose works he was always acquiring, "because he knew the human heart better than all others." He also took with him books by authors he could not stand: Chateaubriand, for instance, next to whose name he regularly wrote "unreadable." *His library does not contain a single book of verse—and that too speaks volumes. "Verse was invented to strengthen the memory", he wrote in* De l'Amour. *"To keep it in drama is barbarous."*

The notes are accompanied by small, clumsy drawings that sometimes represent whole situations in novels. There are also relics such as a minute edition of Horace with a hole right through it; Stendhal noted on the title page: "The hole comes from the Jena campaign." There is also his wooden tobacco box, thickly scribbled on both outside and inside.

THE ITALIAN NOVELIST, *Leonardo Sciascia, one of the few Stendhal experts who has so far had the privilege of seeing the Bucci collection, explains his graphomania by a desire "to leave traces of his life everywhere", and his cryptography, his putting his jottings into code, as a way of "making the traces still more evident by being mysterious and problematic."*

After the great interest taken in "Stendhal the Realist" in the inter-War period, he was completely displaced, in the favour of young readers in particular, by Proust and Joyce and fascination with their psychoanalytic methods; perhaps his style is too simple and the psychological analysis of his young heroes, who reflect the problems of all young generations, is too clear. Presumably the emphasis on individuality strikes young readers as old-fashioned: to rouse interest today a writer evidently has to be more contemporary-minded, more communitarian, and more complicated. Well, with Stendhal presenting himself in the stream of his secret jottings, we have here a writer who is indeed more complicated and more suited to the times, conducting self-psychoanalysis before the term was even invented.

Monika von Zitzewitz

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DISCUSSION

On the War of the Dictionaries

By Laurence Urdang

MR R. W. BURCHFIELD'S comments about American English in his article, "On That Other Great Dictionary ... and the American Language" [May 1977], remind me of an editor who survived several months on my staff when I was in charge of the preparation of *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged Edition.* Revolted by the (admittedly ugly) metaphor, he rejected *basket case* as a slang entry for "quadruple amputee."

As a lexicographer, I should like to address myself to the question implied by Mr Burchfield's comments. Till the *OED* and Dr Johnson's *Dictionary* came along, dictionaries were generally regarded by their compilers as being relatively selective. Both dictionaries changed that; and the work of the lexicographer became—at least as far as the selection of headwords was concerned—an attempt at providing a description of the lexicon of a language. The modern lexicographer, bent on a reasonably accurate description of the lexicon of English (American or British), can no more ignore the occurrence of neologisms, however unpleasant they may be, than can the medical researcher who may be disgusted by leprosy or cancer ignore the pursuit of their treatment and cure. The responsibility of the lexicographer is to describe. It is not to proscribe, either by omission or by a pattern labelling that reflects his opinion about the style or acceptability of a given word, sense, or usage.

The chief criterion available to the lexicographer in reaching his decision about whether a new word, sense, or usage should be included is frequency. That is, if a word appears quite frequently in use by a substantial number of speakers, it merits more serious consideration than a word found buried in an arcane manuscript gathering dust on a shelf in some obscure scholar's attic. Unfortunately, data about frequency are not always available, so the volume of citations for a given word (and sense) and the media where it has appeared must be judged by the lexicographer. The assessment of the results of his work—that is, whether the published dictionary is "good" or not—depends largely on his judgment of these data; and, just as there are good and better lexicographers, there are good and better dictionaries.

MY QUARREL WITH Mr Burchfield's comments is with his stigmatisation, "the meretricious tendencies in American English", which appears in the closing lines of his article. It is passing curious that a large percentage of the people who write to me praise me for my efforts in "preserving the English language" and that an almost equally large percentage see fit to condemn me for corrupting it. None the less, history shows a similar, old-fashioned view of language change. Usage books of the 19th century condemn just as many stylistic features that are still condemned as they do usages that are today accepted as standard by the most exacting writers of British and American English. Many syntactic constructions of the 19th century are criticised as archaic today. Examination of dictionaries of earlier periods reveals that the lexicon has changed—not only expanded, but changed—and linguists (including lexicographers) regard such change, as well as expansion, to be a natural feature of language.

People tend to be highly opinionated about language, when they have any opinions at all, and those over forty years of age continually bemoan the fact that "they don't use English as 'they' used to. . . ." (This in contrast to those under forty who may be more likely to use *like* in place of *as.*) Those over forty don't use English the way "they" used to, either. In Shakespearian English, *rival* meant "companion" and *nice* meant "precise, exact", a meaning it has today in only specialised contexts like *a nice distinction.*

"Musty old values" were, indeed, a whimsy of Lord Peter's, but it is surprising to find Mr Burchfield agreeing (as he seems to) when he

LAURENCE URDANG *is Editor of "Verbatim, The Language Quarterly"; Managing Editor of The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (Unabridged Edition); Editor in Chief of "The Random House College Dictionary"; Compiler Editor of "The New York Times Everyday Reader's Dictionary of Misunderstood, Misused, Mispronounced Words"; and Editor of more than 15 other general and specialised dictionaries of English.*

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refers to the "meretricious tendencies in American English." I have no brief for *Webster's Third*: for its encyclopedic definitions, for its failure to label the new uses of *disinterested* and *infer*, or for its other shortcomings. My criticism, however, stems from another tenet, namely, that language is a social instrument and that it is as much the responsibility of the lexicographer to record his interpretation of the attitudes of people toward the language as it is to record the language itself.

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENCES between American and British English—proportionately about as many as there are between the modern reflexes of these dialects and the way they were used a hundred years ago. Some go relatively unnoticed, like *toward* vs. *towards*. Others are recognised as cultural, like *bathroom* vs. *water closet*, *toilet*, *etc.*, *football* vs. *soccer*, *etc.* To remark upon the movement of the American language to "a much more strident stage, marked by brash innovation of vocabulary . . . by an abandonment in many quarters of well-formedness for words and sentences, by an invasion . . . by the language of the technologists, by the syrupy double-talk of politicians and strategists, and by unacceptable or non-standard grammar of the speech of certain ethnic minorities", is to ignore exactly the same movement in British English. It may be marginally true that the writing in British periodicals is more carefully tailored to a smaller literary élite than that in their mass-market American counterparts. But isn't *gazump* a Briticism (let alone a British practice)? Isn't *loo* heard in preference to almost any other term for *toilet* in Britain?

Isn't the real point that Americans write the way they speak, and Britons affect a writing style distinct from that which they use in speech?

IN A RECENT ARTICLE in *The Times* (20 April 1977), Bernard Levin found some complimentary things to write about *Verbatim*, an American publication. Included in his comment was the following:

> ". . . I had a nasty turn on reading the introductory editorial note in the very first issue, which included a horrible bit of if-for-though: *Verbatim*, we were told, would be 'written in an intelligent (if popular) style. . . .' But such solecisms are rare. . . ."

Although (*not* "if") I wrote that, it was written in a deliberately casual style. Yet Mr Levin had apparently caught me in what he considers to be a solecism, and reading it made me nervous.

Upon examination of *OED* Volume V, I found examples (under I, 4, a) of this usage first attested in *Cursor Mundi* and in Richard Rolle of Hampole. Moreover, the *Supplement* yielded further examples from *New Statesman* (1965) and *Listener* (1967 and 1969). I may not write deathless prose, but I seem to be in the company of some who do.

The issue appears to resolve itself to a matter of personal taste and preference. Surely, Bernard Levin is conceded to be one of the better writers and stylists of our day; and if he execrates if-for-though, then I would accept his criticism, for I am only a poor (American) writer.

Somehow, though, one who has established himself as an *arbiter elegantiarum* in matters of language rarely assumes that responsibility on his own recognisance. More often, he points to the writings of others, usually writers of the past who are acknowledged stylists. But there is scarcely an author of prominence in whose writings cannot be found the solecisms that purists execrate with the greatest vigour: split infinitives can be found in Cather, Wordsworth, Burns, Arnold, Pater, Carlyle, Byron, Macaulay, Mrs Gaskell, Browning, Eliot, Spencer (in *Philosophy of Style*, no less!), Meredith, Hardy, Henry James, Kipling, Shaw, Doyle—shall I stop? Dangling participles are attested in works from Lyly to the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*.

Few if any modern critics of English usage and style have the courage to say, "Here is an example of horrible (or incorrect) English that is horrible (or incorrect) because I say so, and one need look no further for authority." It is a pity that they don't, for there is little to support their views in the writings of those whom they would emulate.

THOUGH COMMENT ON GRAMMAR abounds, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find in the past writings of those we respect a sufficiently large body of criticism of vocabulary, especially neologisms, to prove significant. Most of the criticism that we do find dates to the 19th century, contemporary with the spread of literacy and education. However, criticism of English does occur in the 17th century, in particular among those critics who, like Dryden, modelled their English after Latin. It is from such critics that we have the legacy of spurious "rules" like Never-end-a-sentence-with-a-preposition, Never-split-an-infinitive, and others. Such rules are specious for English, however valid they may be for Latin, in which word order precludes ending a sentence with a preposition and the laws of physics, though permitting atom-splitting, cannot reconcile infinitive-splitting.

Shall we continue our lamentations over lamentable style in English, whether the focus

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be on grammar or on lexicon? What boots it to ignore the spectrum of change and innovation—condoning the British spellings of *artefact* and *candour* and *anaesthetist* alongside their American counterparts, "allowing" *gazump* into British English but refusing to admit *astromogology* into American, and condemning the use of *like* for *as* or *as if* in all forms of English, notwithstanding its "tradition" in the King James Bible, Shakespeare, and other "acceptable" sources?

It cannot be denied that those of us who affect a higher style view with scorn, if not alarm, the encroachments into the realm of writers made by the quasi-literate, the pseudo-literate, and the hemi-semi-demi-literate. I hold, though, that such encroachments, though somewhat crotchety, have long had their effect on the language through their effect on speech. At bottom, is it not true that the *literati* are really condemning our having taught all those boors to read and write and that, not having undergone the proper rites of passage, these illiterati should never have been admitted to the Inner Temple (if I may destroy a metaphor) where the priests jealously guard the flame of Eternal Language Purity? Should we regard the Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Polish, Pennsylvania, Dutch, Pakistanis, (and so on), differently from the way "English" speakers regarded the Danes and the French?

What it really comes down to is a matter of personal taste, and Mr Burchfield's acceptance of *catharism* for (or is it *in*) a dictionary contrasts with his rejection of *astromogology* purely on personal grounds. I neither would nor could deny Mr Burchfield his right to a personal opinion; and I might add that, *personally*, I do not necessarily disagree with him. I am shocked, however, to see such views expressed in an article in which he has taken his professional pen in hand; and my comments are no less evoked by a modicum of nationalistic pride.

In short, though only a poor writer, I am dismayed to discover " 'musty old values' " applied to "meretricious tendencies in American English" by one who, as a scholar, should maintain himself aloof from such excursions. Perhaps the *spivs*, *drones*, *Paki-bashers*, *skinheads* and other members of the British-English speaking world ought to have their say, too.

A Reply

I CAN SYMPATHISE a little (but not too much) with my old friend Larry Urdang's "nationalistic pride" even though it has little to do with lexicography. I also agree, and have never disagreed, with a number of other points in his letter, including the necessity of treating well-established neologisms (*astromogology* is not such a word) in dictionaries, however badly formed they are, and particularly on the general, but not inviolable, principle of recording the vocabulary of a language in dictionaries in a descriptive manner.

Nevertheless, descriptivism must be tempered by common sense. For example, I have yet to see a dictionary of current English that records "seperate" and "crucifiction" as acceptable variants of *separate* and *crucifixion* even though Oxford undergraduates (the only ones whose essays I see) quite frequently use these erroneous forms. Moreover, the smaller the dictionary the more prescriptive it must become because reduction means choice, and variants, informal uses, strange spellings, uses regarded by many people as misuses, and so on, are necessarily excluded to allow the undisputed words and meanings to fit into the restricted space.

My main point seems to have eluded Mr Urdang: namely, that the absence of any agreed standard form of American English, and the amazing range of usage in the United States was for the first time adequately reported in a major general American dictionary in 1961, and journalists and writers reacted as if they had been struck by a tornado. They had not hitherto had a chance to see what lay concealed in Pandora's box. From that point onward the English that a foreigner (*e.g.* a German or Japanese) must learn if he wants to master American English—with its growing proportion of words and constructions from Black Vernacular, Yiddish, Pennsylvania Dutch, and so on—became more difficult. Meanwhile Britain, with its more homogeneous population (the children of immigrants from the West Indies, Pakistan, etc., are using the same regional forms of English as their white fellow-countrymen), and its recognisable educated standard form, remains a difficult model for any foreigner to study, but not nearly as difficult as that which is now emerging in America.

Perhaps my word *meretricious* ("showily and falsely attractive") could have been bettered. I must leave that to others. The issue is not one of "correctness" against "incorrectness", as *that* battle is perpetual in all English-speaking areas. It is about the extraordinary diversity and complexity of some of the main sources of vocabulary and grammar in the United States as compared with those in the gentler traditions of Britain.

R. W. Burchfield

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LETTERS

The Jesus Debate

ENCOUNTER is to be congratulated for airing the views (April 1977) of scholars on aspects of Christianity often relegated to obscure journals. At the same time it seems to me that Hyam Maccoby's rejoinder, though refreshingly combative, contains at least two misleading ideas, the result of his struggle to conscript a Jewish personality, and a militant but apocalyptic one at that, into the Jesus character.

Though the latter (or Passion) part of the Gospels depicts a Jesus who seems to have died for a Jewish cause almost with Pharisee support, the introductory ministry section shows an anti-Jewish and anti-Pharisee Jesus. Because Maccoby does not synthesise these contradictory blocks of tradition, as Christian theology usually does, into a single narrative phenomenon, but prefers to reject the anti-Pharisaism as unhistorical, the crucifixion account becomes for him the real identity-card of Jesus, that is to say, the key to his anti-Roman insurgency. The trouble here is, no hard or even plausible evidence has ever been produced to show that Jesus was engaged in anti-Roman sedition of any kind, apocalyptic or otherwise, a point made with almost stunning frequency by Christians supported by a Talmudic tradition suggesting that the Jews themselves executed Jesus. For this reason there is perhaps no honourable way of re-theologising Jesus's relationship with the Pharisees in order to improve it. The old theological checks and imbalances are back.

Second, to explain away the manifestly un-Jewish attributes of Jesus's character, admittedly salted with Pharisee qualities, Maccoby asserts the former to be late accretions. But significant Christian research (as Dr Sandmel points out) is seeking to establish that the un-Jewish features were present at the start, and there seem to be grounds for believing this may be true.

Moreover, Maccoby's contention, on the other hand, that "the deification of Jesus [is] seen to have originated *later* than the lifetime of Jesus" is betrayed by the fact that the apotheosised Jesus appears in the very earliest known Christian documents, the letters of Paul, and although these may have been later than "Jesus's lifetime" as, in any case, all known Christian documents are purported to be, they are nevertheless our first glimpse into the new tradition. Speculation as to what lies behind the record does not bring us closer to the allegedly informing events.

Maccoby's concluding paragraph dramatises the difficulties of his approach. To concretise the Jesus figure he refers to *Luke* 22 : 36 seemingly depicting a Jesus resorting to violent means, and draws a parallel with Gideon. But this is an impossible assessment because the Gospel carefully and pointedly discloses the utter failure of violence, while the manifest purpose of Jesus in advising his disciples to arm themselves is not to fight but to enable Jesus to label the Messiah as a transgressor. Neither this nor Jesus's injunction "*No more of this*" (*Luke* 22 : 51) in relation to violence suggests a Jewish militant. In fact the oracularly anti-insurgent nature of the entire document far from reflecting Jewish sentiment has an imperial Roman flavour.

For this reason Maccoby's call for a more forthright approach on the Christian debate is to be welcomed.

NIEL HIRSCHSON

Johannesburg
South Africa

THE EVIDENCE THAT Jesus was engaged in "anti-Roman sedition" is:
(*1*) he claimed to be the Messiah, or King of the Jews, an offence against the Roman Occupation of Judaea; (*2*) the *aitia*, or charge, affixed to his cross was that he claimed to be King of the Jews; (*3*) the very fact that he was crucified is strong evidence, crucifixion being specifically the Roman punishment for sedition; (*4*) the Roman Occupation of Judaea (contrary to the white-washing depiction of it in the Gospels) was cruel in the extreme, as we know from Josephus and other sources, and to remain indifferent to it would have been exactly on a par with remaining indifferent to the Nazi Occupation of Europe; (*5*) the alleged reasons for *Jewish* religious antagonism to Jesus all turn out, on examination, to be without basis in the Judaism of Jesus's time, which leaves Jesus's death unexplained unless he fell foul of Rome.

Mr Hirschson points to obvious features of the Gospel narrative, such as the portrayal of Jesus as a pacifist. But when a narrative is full of contradictions, it is permissible to look below the surface. It is no refutation of an attempt to read between the lines to point to the obvious surface features, as if to suggest that these have been overlooked. Mr Hirschson's division of the Gospels into an early block (anti-Jewish) and a late block (pro-Jewish) is entirely without merit. Contradictions exist throughout; and, if anything, the later portion is the more anti-Jewish.

The letters of Paul were written 20–25 years after the death of Jesus, quite time enough for distortions of his doctrine to have arisen. How long did it take for Karl Marx's doctrine to become distorted?

The Talmudic passage saying that the Jews executed Jesus is a late (300 AD) response to Christian propaganda. No authentic Jewish account of Jesus's life-story exists. Jesus was regarded as just another failed Messiah, and he was forgotten by the Jews until the success of Christianity necessitated some reaction.

As for my "struggle to conscript a Jewish personality" for Jesus, what was Jesus if not Jewish? Chinese?

As for Mr Hirschson's explanation of the Two Swords incident, it is taken from a theory by Robert Graves, and it is far from "manifest."

HYAM MACCOBY

London

Mosley Defends

THE REPLY of your correspondent *R* to my letter raises interesting questions. Does he not confuse cause and effect? The cause of the great changes in Russia, Italy and Germany was clearly economic. The "other factors" which he notes, such as the "influence of individuals", were clearly effects. What happens after

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economic crisis can be very diverse both in the policies and personalities it produces. That is why it is so important to consider in advance what happens next: government representing the whole nation, or faction and chaos.

R suggests that in the Thirties I founded our movement when "the worst of the great slump was over." On the contrary, it was postponed, not averted, by British devaluation, Roosevelt's doubling of the price of gold, the armament boom and the Second World War. For the same inherent reasons it now returns after the ravages of war are repaired and the follies of inflation are exhausted.

Faced with the suggestion that in 1932 I should have foreseen that war was inevitable, I will refrain from Bernard Shaw's usual retort when accused of error: it is impossible always to foresee the full extent of other people's mistakes. Yet it may now be allowed that a second opinion was at least legitimate concerning a war that cost the loss of 50,000,000 lives, the loss of the British Empire, the loss of a third of Europe to compulsory communism, and the division of world power between Russia and America. Incidentally, on the subject of cause and effect, without the crisis of war would either Lloyd George or Churchill ever have reached the highest office, from which they were most effectively excluded?

OSWALD MOSLEY

Orsay
France

Who/Whom?

THE CONFLICT between saying that which is true and that which is politically useful is an old one. It continues today, particularly among educators who do not know whether their first duty is to tell the truth or to be "politic", in the many meanings of that word.

Dean Hendrik Gideonse illustrates this conflict ("Eysenck & Cyril Burt", May) when he writes that

> "Scientists must be held accountable for their science, but also for the politics that flow out of or are imbedded in their science, whether they intend those politics or not."

Gideonse's recommendation raises two threatening questions: *1*. Who is entitled to hold whom "accountable" for the political consequences of their science and with what sanctions?; and *2*. What does such a political prescription do to the idea of "truth" and the search for it?

GWYNN NETTLER

Department of Sociology
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Edmonton, Canada

Better Dead than Red?

MY SYMPATHIES are entirely with John Silber in his article in the February ENCOUNTER. But are either he or even Solzhenitsyn quite just to Bertrand Russell, or whoever it was that *did* say "Better Red than dead"?

It is true that as Solzhenitsyn said, this remark is devoid of moral criteria, and I at least would agree that, if said with reference to oneself, it is contemptible. But was it so said, and have we any right to go imposing our moral criteria on others? It's the position as it affects the statesman that bothers me (of course it's a long-standing dilemma): can *he* say "Better dead than Red" if it's the death of others besides himself that he's talking about—as it is? Put it another way, is dead without the option better than Red? Democracy is part of the answer, of course—the statesman has been elected by the people on whose behalf he makes the decisions—but is it a completely satisfying answer? I don't know that Solzhenitsyn frequents the correspondence columns of ENCOUNTER, but perhaps John Silber would oblige with an answer?

A. L. LE QUESNE

Shrewsbury

"Caesarism in China"

PROFESSOR CHALMERS JOHNSON (ENCOUNTER, December, p. 76) appears to have accepted as fact the charges that Lin Piao plotted a military coup and an attempt to assassinate Mao Tse-tung in 1971; but I know of no independent support for the veracity of these charges. I never believed for one moment that Lin plotted to kill Mao (unless he was completely mad). If he had succeeded he would have been execrated as the most dastardly criminal in Chinese history and I do not see how he could have seized power and ruled the country.

My guess is (*1*) that Mao *et al.* decided that Lin had to be liquidated; or (*2*) that Lin did die in an attempt to flee from Peking. Whichever was true, it was going to be very difficult to explain to the Chinese people, and especially to the army officers, the disappearance of Mao's chosen successor; and so these charges were concocted.

K. S. Karol says of the official version of the Lin affair, "But this story flies in the face of all logic even in its details . . ." (*The Second Chinese Revolution*, New York, 1974, p. 415). Why should we accept the official pronouncements at their face value when the Chinese ruling élite presumably share Lenin's contempt for "bourgeois objectivism"? Many of the current charges against Chiang Ch'ing are so contradictory that they cannot all be true.

H. BRUCE COLLIER

Edmonton, Canada

MR COLLIER JOINS a host of China Watchers who during 1971 and 1972 said that it was utterly improbable that Lin could or would have attempted a *coup d'état*. But much of the story about Lin that was related verbally to high US government officials by Chou En-lai, and many of the details of the *coup* attempt published in the Chinese press have been independently verified by scholars and visitors to China—so much so that the weight of evidence today falls on the side of the whole bizarre episode having occurred.[1] One startling aspect of the Lin Piao affair

[1] For all of the relevant Chinese documents, see *The Lin Piao Affair, Power Politics and Military Coup* (New York, 1975, 591 pp.), expertly translated and annotated by Y. M. Kau, editor of the scholarly journal *Chinese Law and Government*.

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is the late general's rather dour sense of humour. In their esoteric communications, he and his fellow conspirators referred to Mao Tse-tung as "*B-52*", the unseen and high-flying bomber that drops the big load.

I agree that not all of the charges against Chiang Ch'ing and other members of the "Gang of Four" are likely to be true. But when Roxane Witke's book,* based on her unprecedented interviews with Madame Mao four years ago, is published later this year, I expect that many of the charges will be verified, particularly those concerning Chiang Ch'ing's "bourgeois" tastes. More important, however, the charges levelled against Lin Piao and the "Gang of Four," true or not, are so serious as virtually to undermine everything Mao has advocated for the past decade.

*Ed. Note: *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing* has now been published by Weidenfeld (London) and Little, Brown (New York).

The Poet & the Parking Lot

"Owê war sint verswunden all miniu jâr? . . . " (Alas, where have all my years gone? Has my life been just a dream, or is it real? And all those things that I used to think stood for something, did they really stand for anything?)
Walthar von der Vogelweide (1170–1230).

TO BOLZANO *(the old Bozen) Walther von der Vogelweide is what Goethe is to Frankfurt-am-Main or Shakespeare is to Stratford-on-Avon. He is the most famous figure of which the South Tyrol and its biggest town can boast. Its central, imposing and spacious central square bears his name. His monument used to stand in the middle of it—until it was banished after the First World War under the pressure of Italian nationalism. Mussolini's Fascists wanted no German poet in Bolzano, and the monument was transplanted to the Rosegger Park.*

But after the Second World War, when the Italian Fascist administration was succeeded by an Italian democratic administration, a demand that the statue should be restored to its traditional place soon arose among the German-speaking population. With the regional autonomy, especially in cultural matters, that the Rome government after prolonged negotiations granted the Austrian ethnical group, the demand naturally grew stronger. The town administration, predominantly in Italian hands, was thoroughly sympathetic and gave repeated assurances that the monument would be returned to the square. According to the German-language newspaper Dolomiten, *promises were repeatedly given and oaths actually sworn that this would happen "soon."*

But nothing happened, and in 1975 some citizens resorted to self-aid. They started a fund to pay for moving the monument and to make it impossible for the authorities to plead shortage of municipal cash. Millions came pouring in—millions of lire, of course, but worth at least £3000 in spite of crumbling exchange rates. Now the authorities intervened. Their pride had obviously been wounded. This was clearly a matter for which the Town Council was responsible, and honour required that it be put right. A special committee of the council is, after all, responsible for "making good" the traces of Fascist high-handedness in the past.

The money collected was invested (earning interest but not, of course, proof against inflation); and the citizens waited for the authorities to act. That was the situation until January last year, when things seemed to be just about to happen. But first, it was claimed, the precise spot in the square where the historic statue had stood must be precisely established.

Changed traffic conditions might perhaps require a slightly different position. A transportable dummy of the great medieval poet was made and different positions were tried out. The Bolzano committee were invited to attend, and a position a few yards south of the original position was chosen—as had in fact been intended even before these official experiments.

But still nothing happened. At the beginning of this year Walther von der Vogelweide was still banished to the Rosegger Park. And now another difficulty has arisen. To relieve the shortage of parking places in Bolzano an underground car park one or two or more storeys deep is to be built under the square. The authorities now say the monument cannot be erected until this has been completed. The committee that raised the fund submitted an expert report according to which it would be perfectly possible to erect the monument before the garage was built. But this was not accepted, and the construction of the car park—it is not even certain that it will be carried out—will take years and years.

It is not entirely surprising that, as a writer in the Dolomiten *suggests, some people are wondering whether "sabotage" and "delaying tactics" are being employed against the South Tyrolese. If a politician or general of an earlier age, or even an especially patriotic local literary figure were involved, it would be intelligible. But a medieval Minnesinger?*

"Dar nâch hân ich geslâfen und enweiz es niht. Nû bin ich erwachet, und ist mir unbekant . . . ."
(It seems as though I have been asleep without knowing it. Now I have woken up, and all the things I used to know like the palm of my hand look strange to me. The place where I was brought up and the people there have become as foreign to me as if it were not true that I had ever known them . . . .)[1]

[1]The quotations are from *The Penguin Book of German Verse* (ed. Leonard Forster).

Nikolas Benckiser

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It is hard to believe that the late Chairman's reputation will emerge from these revelations unscathed. At a bare minimum, he must be marked down as one of the worst judges of character in choosing lieutenants in modern political life—since all of them have turned out to be traitors, capitalist-roaders, or bourgeois rightists. This penchant for selecting untrustworthy subordinates is a trait that Mao shared most particularly with Richard M. Nixon, a failing that perhaps endeared the two political leaders to each other.

CHALMERS JOHNSON

University of Berkeley
California

Who Reads Aristotle?

IN AN OTHERWISE admirable defence of Cyril Burt ("The Detractors", ENCOUNTER, March) John Cohen suddenly says "No one today believes a word that Aristotle said."

Had the *Nicomachean Ethics* been standard reading for psychologists, they would have learnt from it the virtue of rigorous analysis of concepts relating to human thought and behaviour, and the simplistic panacea of I.Q. testing would not have flourished for so long.

ADAM CZERNIAWSKI

Rochester
Kent

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AUTHORS

Italo Calvino's most recent work to appear in English translation is *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, published this year by Secker & Warburg, who also brought out, in 1975, his *Invisible Cities*.

Roy Fuller, who was Oxford Professor of Poetry from 1968–73, was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1970. His most recent volume of poetry is *Poor Roy*, (André Deutsch, 1977).

Peter de Mendelssohn is the author of many books, including one on the Nuremberg Trials and another on the post-war German Press, both based on his experiences as a British officer during World War II and after. He has recently completed the first of two volumes of a Life of Thomas Mann. He lives at present in Munich. . . .

Leo Labedz is editor of *Survey* (a London quarterly) and of *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record* (Penguin, 1972). He edited the standard volume on *Revisionism* (1963). Among his articles in ENCOUNTER are "Shadows over Helsinki" (June 1973), a study of Kolakowski (March 1969), and "The Path Ahead to Europe" (September 1961).

Hilary Spurling is the author of *Ivy When Young: The Early Life of Ivy Compton-Burnett* (Gollancz, 1974). Her *Handbook to Anthony Powell's Music of Time* will be published by Heinemann this autumn.

Christopher Booker, editor of *Private Eye* from 1961–63, is the author of *The Neophiliacs*, an account of the '50s and '60s (Collins, 1969), and of *Goodbye London*, published by Fontana in 1973—when he also received the IPC joint award as campaigning journalist of the year for his articles on planning and property development. He is now working on a study of the seven basic plots of literature which Collins are to publish in 1978.

Jan Morris's third volume of collected travel essays, *Travels*, was published by Faber & Faber last year. Among her many pieces in ENCOUNTER are "Crash Course" (November 1976), "Singapore" (January 1975), and "Hong Kong" (July 1974).

Nora Beloff is the author of *Freedom Under Foot*, published last year by Temple Smith. She was for ten years political correspondent for *The Observer* and is now a freelance journalist.

Peregrine Worsthorne's "Of Strong Unions in Weak Societies", which appeared in the January 1976 ENCOUNTER, forms part of a collection of essays entitled *The Future That Doesn't Work: Social Democracy's Failures in Britain*, edited by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., and published by Doubleday.

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London

TIT FOR TAT: It was unfortunate for Alex Haley, author of *Roots*, that his Kinte ancestor turned out to have been called "Kunta", which sounds rude in English. However [Richard West writes] our English names sound odd to Gambian ears.

THE SPECTATOR

London

CULT OF THE SIBILANT: *I have resigned myself* [Professor E. J. Mishan writes] *to hearing BBC announcers pronounce "adult" as though it were spelled "addled" (which of course, may be the appropriate adjective today).*

But things have now got worse. A snaggle of serpents, it seems, has invaded the studios, as a result of which a growing number of BBC newsmen (and newswomen) have become afflicted with a most pernicious wheeze.

In consequence I learn from the ten o'clock news (BBC 4) that the pound has, again, "depreesiated" —which sounds as though it has gone down with a sickly cold. And, a few nights ago, some earnest commentator assured me that sanctions would never be lifted on exports to "Rhodeesia" so long as "raysial" discrimination, in any form, continues there. I understand, further, that "Rhodeesia" is already in "finanssial" difficulties.

I confess, however, that this cult of the sibilant has a sneaky attracksion. But the question arises: can such controverssial pronunciassion, pressious though it sounds, be rassionalised for the would-be inissiate?

I would most appreessiate your views.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Washington D.C.

BLACK-WHITE BRIDGE: *Because many US inner city children of 14 have the reading skills of seven-year-olds, a brilliant Chicago speech teacher, Grace Holt, has developed a way of taking street lingo and translating it into standard English by easy stages. Mrs Holt and her collaborators call the method "Bridge"* [*Jeremy Campbell reports*].

A story is printed in three forms. The vernacular might say:

"Jerry Porter's jaws was tight. There was this broad on his gig who bugged the brother to no end."

A second transition version runs:

"Jerry Porter was upset and angry. But it wasn't his job that made him angry, it was a certain woman named Mrs Thompson."

The final, standard English version is impeccable:

"Jerry Porter thought that some people were put on this earth just to make his life more difficult. He thought about one woman in particular. She was a woman he worked with."

"Blacks have a tremendous joy in an elegant use of language", said Mrs Holt. "You can achieve a lot of status in the inner city by just using words. If you can't talk well you can't be a leader. Some of my students were flunking in the classroom but I could hear them rhyming their heads off in the halls."

Some of the stories in "Bridge" are marvellous proof of the power and poetry of street talk. **"It was a superbad ship, the meanest thing on the water",** *begins one tale about a black stoker on the Titanic.* **"It could move like four Bloods in tennis shoes."**

EVENING STANDARD

London

HUNGLISH: *I see [writes Professor Alan S. C. Ross] that Hunglish, the Hungarian version of Franglais (article, April 6), does not only have true borrowings from English (like* szpré *from* spray*), but also "pseudo-borrowings." These arise when the foreign speakers do not hit on a real English word, but are content with what they think the English might say. Thus, Hunglish* lunch-cream *seems an odd—and nasty—word for pâté. And the* Second Supplement *to the* Oxford English Dictionary *does not record the word* farmer *as applied to jeans; with their rather peculiar spelling-system, the Hungarians no doubt pronounce this like the English word* former, *with the Rs sounded. And the English do not have their drinks exactly in a* drink bar.

Pseudo-borrowings of English words are not uncommon; the French have their ball-trap, *which means "clay-pigeon-shooting." And the* smoking, *meaning "a dinner-jacket", is widespread in Europe—but a dinner-jacket is precisely what a* smoking-jacket *or* smoking-coat *(from which the word comes) wasn't.*

The Japanese took modern boy*—in itself not a very usual English or American expression—and made it into* mobo; *this means a hooligan.*

THE TIMES

Paris

FREEDOM: On their first free day of their fully-booked visit to Paris, the dancers of the Shanghai Ballet made a pilgrimage to Père Lachaise cemetery.

With so many sights from which to choose, why Père Lachaise?

"Because it is very instructive", said Mr. Chang.

"But there are so many sights from which to choose."

"I told you it was very instructive", repeated Mr. Chang sharply.

At the cemetery, the company paid their respects to the graves of victims of the Commune of 1870–71 and the burial place of Eugène Pottier, who wrote the Internationale.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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The Fire and the Sun

Why Plato Banished the Artists

Iris Murdoch

The distinguished novelist and philosopher here discusses Plato's views on art and examines sympathetically the reasons for his hostility towards it. She offers a coherent and fully argued account of Plato's theories of art and of beauty, and of their metaphysical background. The argument more widely concerns the place of art in life, and discusses other thinkers, including Kant, Tolstoy, Freud, and Kierkegaard. £2.50

The Novels of Anthony Trollope

James R. Kincaid

Trollope loved to compare himself to a shoemaker, and he was, in his way, closer to the truth than those who attacked him for violating the rules of dramatic illusion, of art as 'history'. Trollope is a maker, not an historian, and this book attempts to work out through detailed analyses of his major novels some of the implications of his brilliant and subtle exploitation of that position. £9.75

Wilfred Owen

Jon Stallworthy

Since its publication in 1974, this outstanding biography has won the Duff Cooper Memorial Prize, the W. H. Smith Literary Award, and in America the E. M. Forster Award; it has received the widest critical acclaim: 'Surely one of the finest biographies of our time' (Graham Greene in *The Sunday Times*), 'an outstanding book, a worthy memorial to its subject' (Kingsley Amis in *The Observer*). Illustrated £2.50 *Oxford Paperbacks*

A Portion for Foxes

Anthony Thwaite

What Christopher Ricks has called Anthony Thwaite's 'acute and humane insight' is abundantly apparent in this new collection. Places are the starting-points of several of the poems, but there are some entirely new departures too: anecdotal and meditative poems concerned with life and mortality, and some light and not-so-light confrontations with literary situations. Paper covers £2.25

The Hinterland

Peter Scupham

Peter Scupham's new poems shift from the suggestions given by survivals of the antique, medieval, and post-Renaissance world into a sonnet sequence whose central theme is the Great War of 1914–18 and the complexity of light and shade that experience has thrown on our own time. The book closes with a group of poems linking the perceptions of childhood to the elegiac tones of experience and old age. Paper covers £1.95

Divine Comedies

James Merrill

When James Merrill's *Braving the Elements* won the Bollingen Prize for Poetry in 1973, the citation praised his 'wit and delight in language, his exceptional craft, his ability to enter into personalities other than his own, and his sustained vitality', These qualities are all displayed at their height in his new book, which contains an astonishing narrative poem of 100 pages, 'The Book of Ephraim', plus nine other poems of varying lengths. £2.95

Oxford University Press

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